ALA American Library Association

Booklist Reader

Booklist
Leading book discovery
January 2025

Book and audiobook recommendations for all ages

Armchair Travel on Audio

Recent Travel Books

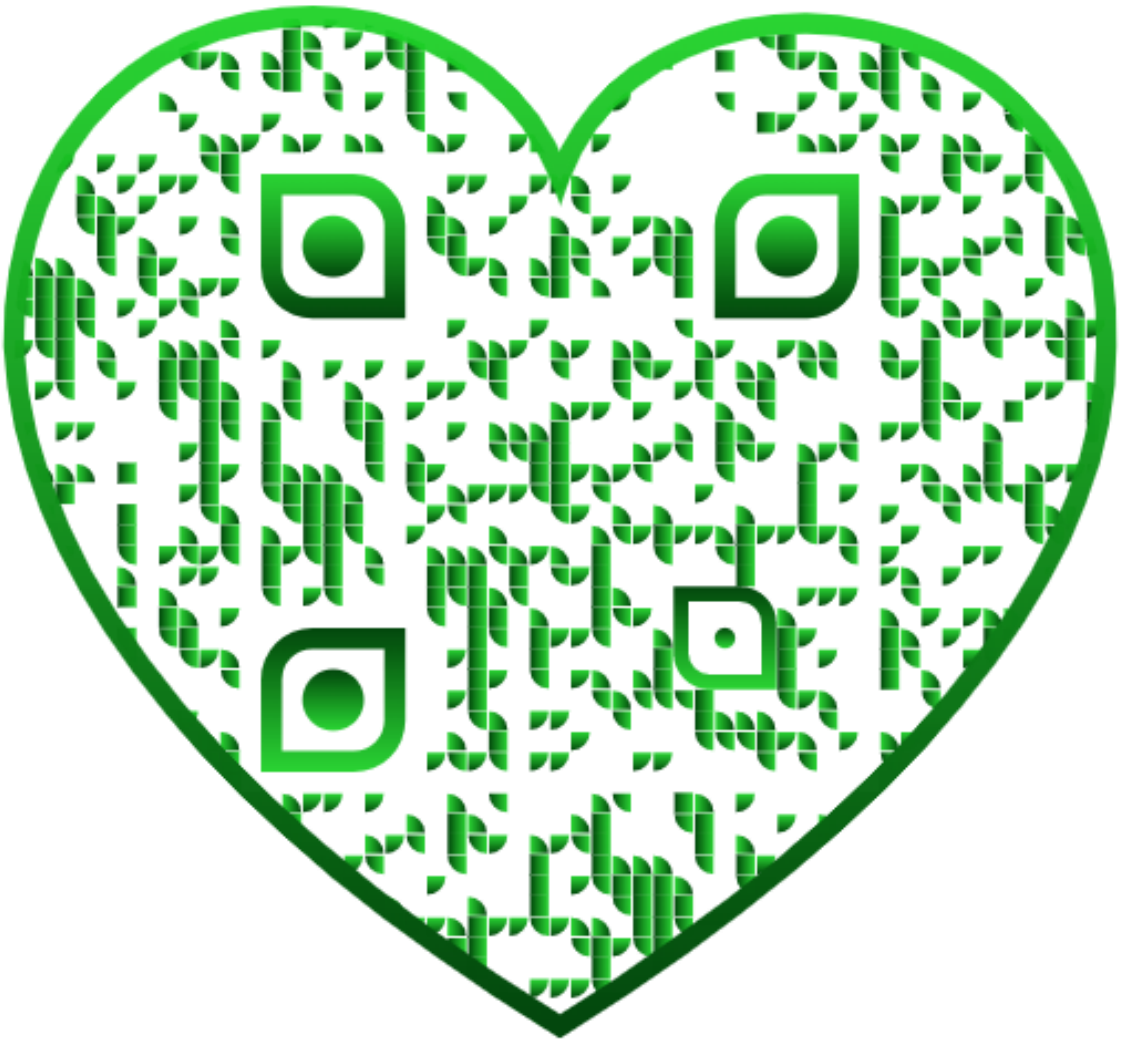
Read-alikes: *The Swans of Harlem*

Top Books Read-alikes & Listen-alikes

Art and design by Kimberly Glyder, from *Elixir: In the Valley at the End of Time*, by Kapka Kassabova

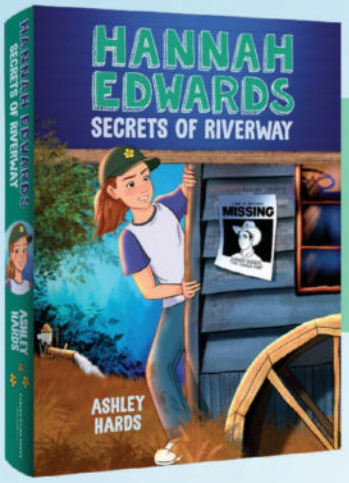
PBS BOOKS

LIBRARY READS



FABLED FILMS PRESS

Bringing Kids Together with Feel-Good Series and FREE Turnkey Activities



Mystery & Authentic ADHD Reimagining of *Hamlet*

A relatable coming-of-age mystery about ghosts, small-town secrets, family, friendship, school, and neurodiversity. Debut Ashley Hards provides a fresh take on *Hamlet* that was inspired by her study of Shakespeare at McGill University and her own diagnosis of ADHD.

"Captures the middle-grade spirit" –*Booklist*

New Chapter Book for Ages 9–12
HC ISBN 978-1-944020-91-0

Meet Ashley Hards! Watch her Book Talk Video at: bit.ly/Teach_Hannah

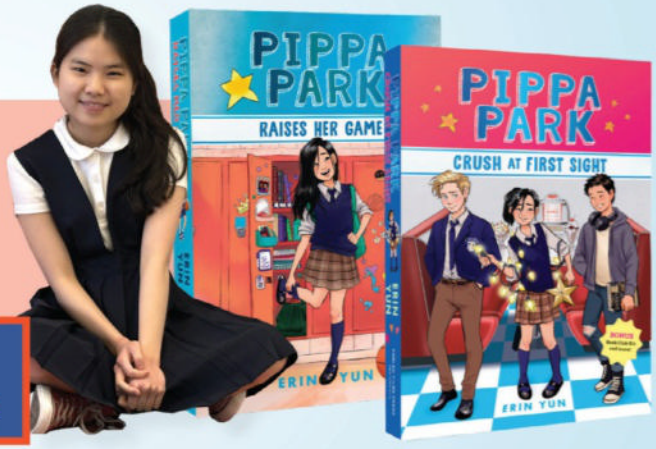
Erin Yun's Bestselling AAPI Books

Pippa Park is a relatable series for kids 9-12 about friendship, peer pressure, family, and identity. Use new diary-style video shorts to jumpstart important conversations in your library. **@PippaParkOfficial**

Chapter Books for Ages 9–12

Book 1 PB ISBN 978-1-944020-28-6
Book 2 PB ISBN 978-1-944020-90-3

Watch on YouTube: bit.ly/PPYT_EDU



Watch NEW YouTube Series

Pair Fiction & Nonfiction for Earth Day Programs!

Fun-filled animal adventure books with companion nonfiction and educational resources connect kids to the science behind the characters. By Tracey Hecht.

Chapter Books & Early Readers | All School Read Pick for Grades K-6
Mysterious Abductions (Fiction #1) PB ISBN 978-1-944020-02-6
Unique Adaptations of Nighttime Animals (NF) PB ISBN 978-1-944020-72-9

Request Activity Kit: bit.ly/3wst1NF

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Booklist Reader

January 2025
Volume 4, Issue 5

Spotlight on Biographies & Memoirs & Travel

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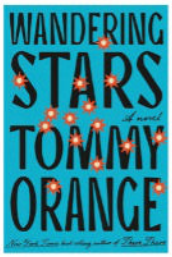

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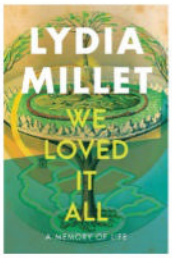

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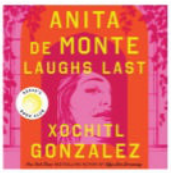

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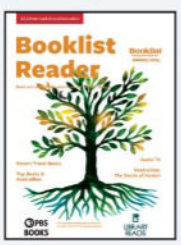

On the Cover

From *Elixir: In the Valley at the End of Time,* by Kapka Kassabova, featured in Recent Travel Books (p.6). Cover art and design by Kimberly Glyder. Used with permission of Graywolf Press.

From the Publisher

Happy New Year! I hope you had wonderful holidays and were able to spend quality time with friends, family, and those you are closest to. I also hope you had some personal time, away from the festivities, to curl up with a great book. I like to think we at *Booklist Reader* were with you in spirit as, toward the end of 2024, we recommended wonderful books focused on food, cozy and scary reads, and so much more. Now, in January, with winter upon us, we like to escape a bit and consider travel in the world and of the armchair-variety. Check out Donna Seaman's Recent Travel Books (p.6), or consider, as Leah von Essen notes in Down Under (p.3), "what do we know of what it's truly like to live in Australia, from the outback to its bustling cities, from its riverbanks to its coasts?" There are many other wonderful recommendations in this issue including audiobooks and books for young readers. I hope at least one outstanding book keeps you company as you embark upon your own journeys into the new year.

—George Kendall
gkendall@ala.org

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Leading book discovery

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Down Under

by Leah von Essen

Australia is a world of unexpected wonders. Many of us know of its colorful birds, herds of kangaroo, underwater wonderlands, and frightening spiders. But what do we know of what it's truly like to live in Australia, from the outback to its bustling cities, from its riverbanks to its coasts?

These books are all by Australian authors, and help expose the inner lives and bigger conversations taking place in the country's cities, small towns, and forests. The books range from a novel about an Aboriginal tribe trying to protect its ancestral land from exploitation to a female-driven mystery surrounding the realities of domestic abuse to the tale of two teen boys being mentored by a surfer with a sketchy personal life.

Big Little Lies. By Liane Moriarty. 2014. Putnam/Amy Einhorn.

In this best-selling, HBO-adapted hit, three women who all have children in the same kindergarten class bond over their domestic dramas, relationships, and motherhood struggles. The original frothy, intensely readable book is set in a fictional peninsula inspired by the beaches north of Sydney, and highlights the interior lives of these mothers and the ways the group's secrets become lethal.

Boy Swallows Universe. By Trent Dalton. 2019. Harper.

Eli's babysitter is a famous escape artist and murderer. But that's the least complicated thing about his life. His stepfather and mother are dealing drugs again, and his mute brother keeps writing out cryptic warnings about what's to come. Eli's story, an action-filled, emotional coming-of-age tale that's populated by a rough upbringing and a helping of dark humor and irony, is a great read that mature teen readers and adults will enjoy.

Breath. By Tim Winton. 2008. Farrar.

One of Australia's most iconic authors, Winton writes here about two teen boys being mentored by a surfer named Sando. In a coming-of-age story about courage and history, the two adolescents are in love with their dynamic of bold dares and risk-taking, but find themselves having to ask questions about Sando's personal life, setting them on a bumpy path.

Bridge of Clay. By Markus Zusak. 2018. Knopf.

The newest YA book from Zusak (*The Book Thief,* 2005) features the five Dunbar brothers, their camaraderie, and their struggle to get by in the suburbs of Sydney. With their mother dead and their father gone somewhere unknown, the brothers (with sensitive Clay and his good friend, a young burgeoning female jockey, at their center) must find love, forgiveness, and hope with one another.

Carpentaria. By Alexis Wright. 2009. New Directions.

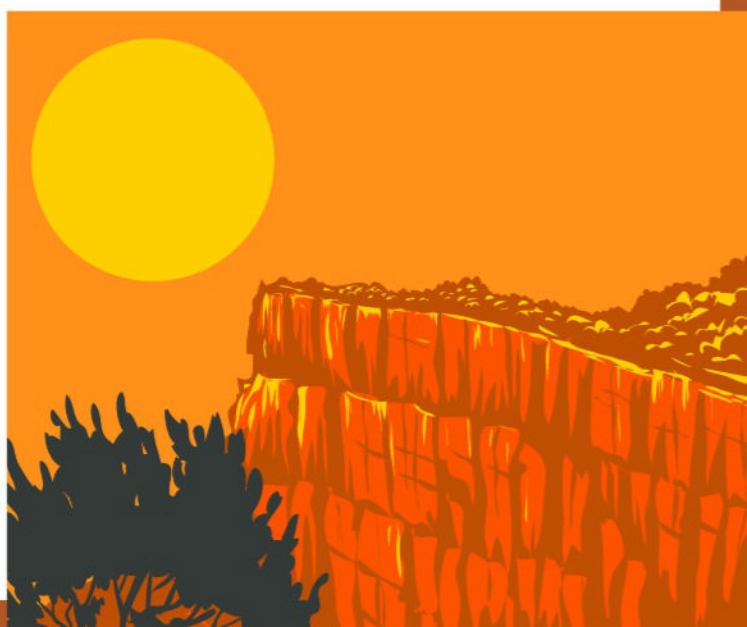
This award-winning best-seller by an Aboriginal activist and author tells the story of a town called Desperance in which tensions both among Aboriginal families and between them and white residents are spiking. But it's also a poetic, rich book that brings the Aboriginal "Dreamtime," folklore, myth, and memory, into the present, exploring the town's characters and the overall life of Aboriginal Australian communities.

The Thorn Birds. By Colleen McCullough. 1977. Avon.

This classic of Aussie literature is a powerful epic about a family facing the difficulties of running a huge sheep station, tracking their lives from natural disasters like wildfire and floods to the tragic human turns life can take. At the core of the book is Meggie, a young, resilient tomboy who has to face a patriarchal world of male ambition to find a place for herself, and a reverend who's questioning his religion in the face of unexpected love.

The Yield. By Tara June Winch. 2020. HarperVia.

A decade after leaving her home behind, August Gondiwindi returns for her grandfather's burial. When she finds out that the town's land has been sold to a mine, she becomes determined to stop it. But it won't be an easy road—she'll have to confront the traumas she's been running from to do it. This book is a rich, fast-moving contemporary novel about the Wiradjuri language, Aboriginal protest and legacy, and confronting grief.

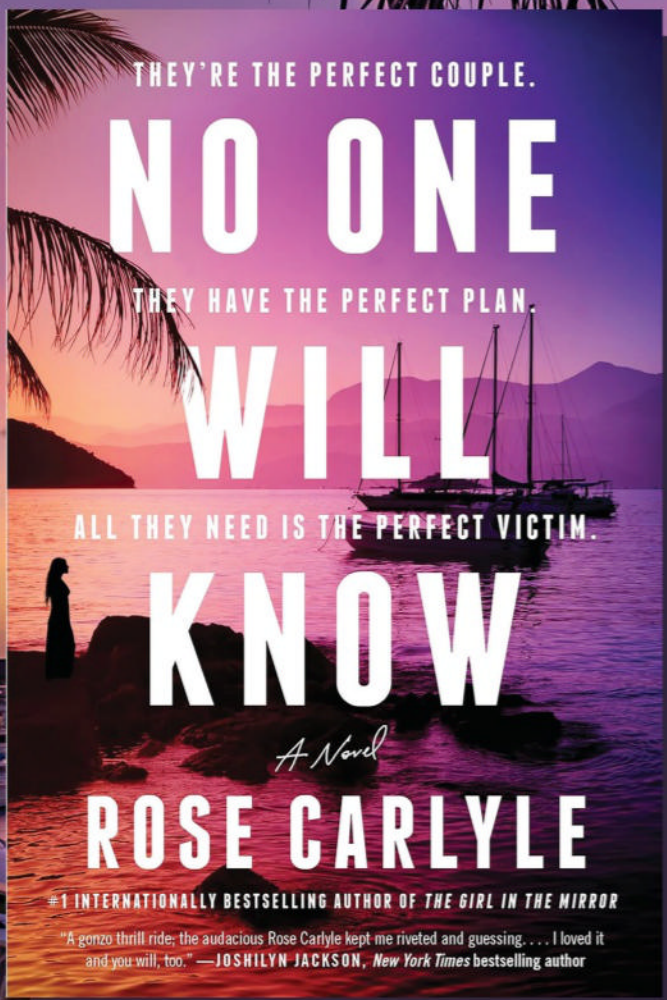


10 Questions

Rose Carlyle

by John Charles

Rose Carlyle is a lawyer and keen adventurer. She has crewed on scientific yachting expeditions to subantarctic islands and has sailed with her family from Thailand to South Africa. She is the author of the #1 international best-seller *The Girl in the Mirror* and lives in New Zealand with her three children.


THEY'RE THE PERFECT COUPLE.
NO ONE
THEY HAVE THE PERFECT PLAN.
WILL
ALL THEY NEED IS THE PERFECT VICTIM.
KNOW
A Novel
ROSE CARLYLE
#1 INTERNATIONALLY BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF THE GIRL IN THE MIRROR
"A gonzo thrill ride; the audacious Rose Carlyle kept me riveted and guessing. . . . I loved it and you will, too." —JOSHILYN JACKSON, New York Times bestselling author

1. Who is Rose Carlyle when she is at home?
When I'm not writing, I love to be outdoors. I live near the beach and my favorite thing is to swim or bodysurf, even in winter. I live in Auckland, New Zealand, and I enjoy travelling to far-flung places. I've traveled extensively throughout Asia and Africa, and I've sailed to some of the world's most remote locations including New Zealand's subantarctic islands. I also love spending time with family, especially my three children.

2. What would you like readers to know about **No One Will Know***?*
No One Will Know is a thriller about Eve Sylvester, a young woman who has grown up in foster care and finds herself in a desperate situation: friendless, penniless, and pregnant. Eve receives a dream offer to move to a spectacular private island, where a wealthy but secretive couple offer her a great job opportunity. Once Eve arrives on the island, she discovers that not everything is as it seems. Soon, Eve's life is at stake—and the life of her child.

3. What can you tell us about your firsthand experience with sailing and yachts, and did any of this provide inspiration when it came time to write* No One Will Know*?

It's a truly wonderful thing to travel out of sight of land on a sailing yacht. I love sharing this magical experience with readers—without them facing any risk of seasickness, storms, or pirates! My first offshore sailing trip was a scientific yachting expedition to New Zealand's subantarctic islands. I encountered challenging sea conditions in the mighty Southern Ocean, but I fell in love with this stunning part of the world. I have also sailed with my husband and children across the Indian Ocean from Thailand to South Africa. I love capturing the beauty of these moments in my writing, while adding in some intrigue, suspense, and villainy!

4. Is the vividly evoked island setting in* No One Will Know *based on a real place?

No One Will Know takes place on a fictional island called Breaksea Island, which is loosely based on Bruny Island in Tasmania. Bruny Island has a gorgeous landscape and a magnificent lighthouse, but I created a fictional bay called Paradise Bay which serves as home to two of the novel's main characters, the glamorous Julia and Christopher Hygate. I enjoyed imagining the kind of lifestyle a wealthy couple might create for themselves on a beautiful island, complete with beachside mansion, private marina, and, of course, a helicopter.

5. What five words best describe* No One Will Know*?

Fun, exotic, twisty, heartfelt, exhilarating!

6. What is the book that made you fall in love with reading?

When I was seven, I read *I Am David* (also known as *North to Freedom*), by Anne Holm. It was a warm summer's day, I was at my family's beach house, and all the other kids were running around having fun in the sunshine, but I couldn't drag myself away from this beautiful, sad story. As I read, I remember I felt as though I truly was David, the hero of the novel. I had discovered that reading can allow you to become somebody else for a while.

7. What role have libraries played in your life?

I have loved libraries since before I can remember. When I was very young, my mother used to load my brother and sister and me into an oversized pram and walk us to the local library every Friday. I remember my sister and I used to hunt for books that had duplicate copies so that we could read the same book at the same time. That library felt like a second home. Today, I live within walking distance of my local library, which is an absolute delight for me.

8. What is the best piece of life advice you have been given?

Back when all my children were under the age of four and life was hectic, I met a woman who also had young children and we became close friends. Marie-Paule spoke six languages and had recently arrived in New Zealand after living in China. One of the things I loved about her was the proverbs she had collected from all over the world. One of her favorites was "This too shall pass." Marie-Paule would repeat these words whenever one of us was having a bad day. She explained that the phrase is a loose translation of panta rhei, the famous words of the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus. The phrase could also be translated as everything changes. I love that Heraclitus wrote those words so long ago, and they are still valid today. It's a thought that has always comforted me whenever life seems particularly challenging.

9. What is next for you as an author?

I'm working on my third novel, another thriller, which I hope will feature the same things readers have enjoyed about my first two books: beautiful settings, a plot with a killer twist, and fabulously wealthy people behaving badly!

10. How can readers learn more about you and your books?

I love to connect with readers! Readers can visit my website, www.rosecarlyle.com, or they can follow me on Instagram or Facebook.

Recent Travel Books

by Donna Seaman

Curiosity, grief, and love propelled the authors of these impassioned tales of exploration and discovery to conduct research, embark on epic journeys, and share social critiques and stories of wonder, humor, beauty, and adventure.

Airplane Mode: An Irreverent History of Travel. By Shahnaz Habib. 2023. Catapult.

Writer and translator Habib, a Muslim and Third World-raised woman of color, observes that the passport is not always a document of access; for some it's used to prevent travel. And what if true cosmopolitanism isn't about predictable tourism, but, rather, the education one gets from migration and minorityhood? A timely reframing of what it means to travel.

Arctic Traverse: A Thousand-Mile Summer of Trekking the Brooks Range. By Michael Engelhard. 2024. Mountaineers.

Wilderness guide Engelhard set out on a solo thousand-mile hike along Alaska's Brooks Range, above the Arctic Circle, hauling a 50-plus-pound backpack and relying on supply caches, as he records in this vivid, witty account of a grand and thoughtful adventure in a uniquely spectacular region.

Cargo of Hope: Voyages of the Humanitarian Ship *Vega*. By Shane Granger. 2024. Lyons.

Sailor Granger recounts the efforts he and his crew made to transport humanitarian aid to devastated communities in Indonesia in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami aboard the redoubtable *Vega*, a wooden Norwegian nineteenth-century sailing ship, in which they battled treacherous seas and other marine mayhem only to arrive at devastated ports of call.

Elixir: In the Valley at the End of Time. By Kapka Kassabova. 2023. Graywolf.

Kassabova shares her travels to her homeland, Bulgaria, to learn from the elders about nature-based "ailing and healing," visiting the magical Mesta River basin, and recounting tales of rituals and the Pomaks, Bulgarian Muslims.

Falling into Place: A Story of Love, Poland, and the Making of a Travel Writer. By Thomas Swick. 2023. Rowman & Littlefield.

Love made Swick a travel writer: he fell for a young Polish woman and ended up exploring Eastern Europe in a time of significant change, launching his career as a keen observer and eloquent chronicler.

A History of the World in Twelve Shipwrecks. By David Gibbins. 2024. St. Martin's.

Best-selling novelist and underwater archaeologist Gibbins closely examines 12 sunken vessels, ranging from a Bronze Age wreck off England's Dover coast to a WWII merchant ship sunk off the coast of Ireland, revealing how each offers evidence of the state of the world at the time.

The Last Ride of the Pony Express: My 2,000-Mile Horseback Journey into the Old West. By Will Grant. 2023. Little, Brown.

Fascinated by the famously quixotic Pony Express, Santa

Fe–based journalist Grant saddled up for his long investigative ride (he had two valiant horses, Chicken Fry and Badger), which yielded keen observations on the history, land, nature, economies, and personalities woven into today's American West.

Mars on Earth: Wanderings in the World's Driest Desert. By Mark Johanson. 2024. Rocky Mountain.

Travel writer Johanson recounts his adventures in the driest zone on Earth, the Atacama Desert, a 600-mile expanse on Chile's northern coast, detailing the unbearably arid and desolate conditions, vast lithium reserves, extensive thermal pools, high-altitude outposts, regional cuisines, and seminal events.

The Raven's Nest: An Icelandic Journey through Light and Darkness. By Sarah Thomas. 2024. Atlantic.

Writer and documentary filmmaker Thomas, living in England after growing up in Kenya, ended up in Iceland, where she married. She now recalls key magical moments in luminous detail: gathering sheep from mountain pastures, hot springs under moonlight, the day the sun finally rises over the hills after a long, dark winter.

Reservations: The Pleasures and Perils of Travel. By Steve Burgess. 2024. Douglas & McIntyre.

Canadian writer and broadcaster Burgess addresses, with warmth and humor, the ethical dilemmas of tourism, digging into trends and phenomena contributing to climate change, overcrowded destinations, degradation of local communities, and damage to natural and cultural treasures.

Stranger in the Desert: A Family Story. By Jordan Salama. 2024. Catapult.

Salama's paternal grandparents came to New York from Argentina, while his mother's family emigrated from Iraq. When he came across a family history chronicling forced migrations through Syria to Argentina and his great-grandfather's life as a traveling salesman, he decided to retrace his ancestor's route through the Andes Mountains.

Subpar Planet: The World's Most Celebrated Landmarks and Their Most Disappointed Visitors. By Amber Share. 2024. Plume.

Funny, insightful, and lively, Share's descriptions of renowned travel destinations poke fun at travel writing and travelers as she pairs well-researched descriptions of such popular sites as Peru's Machu Picchu, Tanzania's Mount Kilimanjaro, and Italy's Tower of Pisa with critical reviews from unimpressed tourists, contrasting the absurdity of people's expectations with the true wonders of the world's cultural and natural treasures.

The World Walk: 7 Years. 28,000 Miles. 6 Continents. A Grand Meditation, One Step at a Time. By Tom Turcich. 2024. Skyhorse.

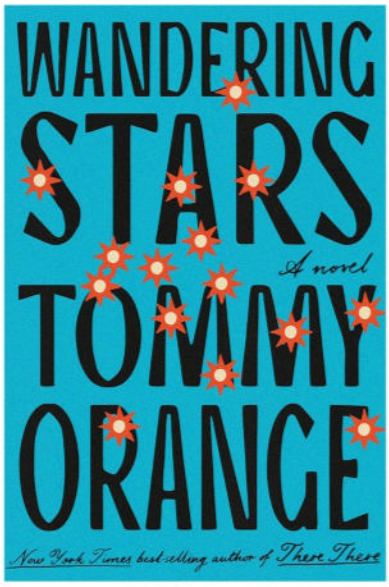
Turcich was obsessed with death, especially after the tragic losses of two high-school friends. At 26, he decided to embark on a walking tour around the world, leaving New Jersey and heading, initially, to Panama City. He would be challenged by physical woes and COVID-19 lockdowns, but he and his canine companion, Savannah, would not be deterred.

Top Fiction & Read-alikes

Wandering Stars, by Tommy Orange

by Annie Bostrom

Like Tommy Orange's *Wandering Stars,* these novels and story collections guide readers from branch to branch of family trees, meditate on the ferociousness and beauty of survival, and illuminate history the way only fiction can.



The American Daughters. By Maurice Carlos Ruffin. 2024. One World.

In this sobering yet liberatory portrayal of American slavery and of the courage, determination, and intelligence required to survive it, an enslaved girl is drawn into an underground network of Black women and girls working to undermine the Confederacy from within.

American Histories. By John Edgar Wideman. 2018. Scribner.

In stories that blur the line between fact and fiction, form and function, and history and autobiography, Wideman's shape-shifting, lyrical narratives offer mesmerizing and challenging perspectives on the creative process and the Black experience.

The Covenant of Water. By Abraham Verghese. 2023. Grove.

Spanning 70 years, Verghese's instantly absorbing novel, which begins with the 1900 marriage of a 12-year-old girl to a 40-year-old widower in India's Saint Thomas Christian community, illuminates colonial history, challenges castes and classism, and exposes injustices.

The Love Songs of W. E. B. du Bois. By Honorée Fanonne Jeffers. 2021. Harper Perennial.

Poet Jeffers' incandescent multigenerational saga is an audacious, mellifluous love song to an African American family, centered on contemporary heroine Ailey and the tales of her multiracial ancestors, whose sufferings and blood infuse the rich Georgia soil.

Natural History. By Andrea Barrett. 2022. Norton.

Spiraling through time and a "complicated family tree," Barrett's subtly linked, saturated, and enthralling tales dissect gender roles in portrayals of families during Prohibition, a woman compiling a Civil War history, and a young woman determined to become a pilot in the 1920s.

Pachinko. By Min Jin Lee. 2017. Grand Central.

Shaped by impeccable research, meticulous plotting, and empathic perception, Lee's exquisite, haunting epic crosses almost a century, four generations, and three countries while depicting an ethnic Korean family that cannot claim a single shared name because "History has failed us."

The Perishing. By Natashia Deón. 2021. Counterpoint.

Recounted by two Black women living nearly a century apart, Deón's tantalizing, intoxicating, and fantastical novel is a haunting tale of immortality and mystery grounded in Black history and tradition.

The Stone Home. By Crystal Hana Kim. 2024. Morrow.

With breathtaking storytelling that provides indelible testimony to witness and behold, Kim transforms an ignominious slice of modern Korean history into a mesmerizing exploration of family bonds repeatedly tested by tortuous circumstances.

This Strange Eventful History. By Claire Messud. 2024. Norton.

Drawing on her own family history in this gorgeously realized, century-spanning, international, and multigenerational saga, Messud choreographs persistent sorrow, surprising choices, political paradoxes, helpless entanglements, and thwarted dreams.

The Sweetest Fruits. By Monique Truong. 2019. Penguin.

Enhancing history with illuminating herstory, Truong presents the life of Lafcadio Hearn through the four most important women in his life: his willful Greek mother, his determined first wife, his protective last wife, and his tenacious first biographer.

Top Nonfiction & Read-alikes

We Loved It All, by Lydia Millet

by Donna Seaman

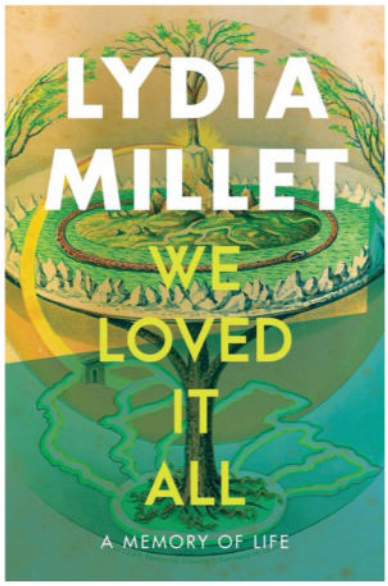
Nature-centered novelist and conservationist Millet, a writer of spectacular imagination, scientific knowledge, conscience, and artistry, turns to nonfiction, entwining personal revelations with keen inquiries into our misapprehension of the full extent of our dependence on the living world we are so precipitously destroying. Each of the writers below does the same in their own creative, caring, and illuminating way.

Erosion: Essays of Undoing. By Terry Tempest Williams. 2019. Farrar/Sarah Crichton.

An apostle of life and earth and a soul-revving teller of true stories, Williams brings lyricism, candor, mystery, and factual exactitude to the affecting essays collected here, each a fresh, personal, lucid, and passionate take on why it's essential for humanity to conserve nature on our warming planet.

The Flag, the Cross, and the Station Wagon: A Graying American Looks Back at His Suburban Boyhood and Wonders What the Hell Happened. By Bill McKibben. 2022. Holt.

Contrasting what he was taught about American history as a boy with the facts, longtime climate activist and writer McKibben dovetails personal reckonings with an astute elucidation of our social justice and environmental crises, arguing wisely that facing the truth about our past is the only way forward to a more just and sustainable future.



Groundglass: An Essay. By Kathryn Savage. 2022. Coffee House.

In the wake of her father's death from cancer caused by his job and where he lived, Savage investigates Superfund sites, elegizes the lost innocence of bittersweet childhood, grieves, and offers a compassionate and incendiary look at people who live on or near and endure the consequences of polluted land and water.

How Far the Light Reaches: A Life in Ten Sea Creatures. By Sabrina Imbler. 2022. Little, Brown.

Science journalist Imbler pairs vibrant, complexly revelatory descriptions of the lives of wondrous creatures of the deep with candid accounts of her experiences as a mixed-race and queer individual seeking their place in an often-inhospitable world.

The Inner Coast. By Donovan Hohn. 2020. Norton.

Hohn's essays express his love for coastal regions, especially his home state of Michigan, even as he grapples with the water crisis in Flint. Marked by his sparkling wit and boundless curiosity, Hohn's tales shimmer with his joyful discoveries of connections of ever-increasing complexity among literature, science, history, and geography.

The Mourner's Bestiary. By Eiren Caffall. 2024. Row House.

Caffall shares her wonder over the might and beauty of the ocean and her abiding concern for its future, a fascination she inherited from her mother, describing the as-yet-incurable genetic kidney disorder she inherited from her father as "a rising sea under the skin." This nexus between ocean and human charges her ardently researched, candid, dramatic, and ravishing mix of science and memoir.

Our House Is on Fire: Scenes of a Family and a Planet in Crisis. By Greta Thunberg and others. 2020. Penguin.

Every human is dependent on the biosphere, yet, in spite of dire warnings about fossil fuels and global warming, we've failed to mobilize. Enter a young Swedish activist, Greta Thunberg, who courageously speaks truth to power. This blazingly frank family memoir reveals the grueling struggles that propelled Thunberg onto the world stage.

Unsolaced: Along the Way to All That Is. By Gretel Ehrlich. 2021. Pantheon.

In Ehrlich's episodic memoir of ranch life and global travels, visionaries and lovers, environmental destruction and loss, she illuminates daring expeditions, meditative interludes, and her insights into every living being's connection to the earth.

Wild Life: Finding My Purpose in an Untamed World. By Rae Wynn-Grant. 2024. Zando.

Wildlife ecologist and National Geographic Society research fellow Wynn-Grant presents a fascinating memoir about love of the natural world, a passion for science, the barriers facing aspiring Black women scientists, and her own influential career.

Top 10

Biographies

Transformative musicians, key freedom fighters, scientists under siege, women intelligence officers, and an early photographer inspired the most commanding new biographies.

3 Shades of Blue: Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Bill Evans, and the Lost Empire of Cool. By James Kaplan. 2024. Penguin.

Kaplan offers new and revelatory perspectives on three jazz geniuses on the landmark 1959 recording, *Kind of Blue*, within a sharply drawn social context.

Becoming Ella Fitzgerald: The Jazz Singer Who Transformed American Song. By Judith Tick. 2023. Norton.

Tick tracks every phase of Fitzgerald's arduous and influential life as a daringly innovative vocalist, from her rough childhood to legendary records and extensive world tours.

Chamber Divers: The Untold Story of the D-Day Scientists Who Changed Special Operations Forever. By Rachel Lance. 2024. Dutton.

After the disastrous 1942 Allied amphibious landing in Dieppe, France, a group of scientists, including the maverick polymath J. B. S. Haldane and German Jewish refugees, risked their lives in a race to develop critical underwater breathing devices.

Double Exposure: Resurveying the West with Timothy O'Sullivan, America's Most Mysterious War Photographer. By Robert Sullivan. 2024. Farrar.

Known for his Civil War coverage and dramatic Western landscapes, photographer Timothy O'Sullivan helped a young country see itself in the midst of war, violent conquest, and environmental degradation.

Madonna: A Rebel Life. By Mary Gabriel. 2023. Little, Brown.

Gabriel's minutely detailed biography of performer and international icon Madonna illuminates her formative years and follows her artistic evolution from her first album in 1983 to the present.

Medgar and Myrlie: Medgar Evers and the Love Story That Awakened America. By Joy-Ann Reid. 2024. Mariner.

MSNBC host Reid's dual portrait of heroic civil rights activists Medgar and Myrlie Evers is a personal love story and a tale of the "higher love it took for Black Americans to love America and to fight for it."

The Rebel's Clinic: The Revolutionary Lives of Frantz Fanon. By Adam Shatz. 2024. Farrar.

Shatz offers a deep inquiry into Martinique-born freedom fighter and radical philosopher Frantz Fanon, whose pathbreaking books continue to have a profound impact.

The Sisterhood: The Secret History of Women at the CIA. By Liza Mundy. 2023. Crown.

Mundy tells the astounding stories of the talented and tough women who excelled at the CIA in spite of its entrenched and dangerous sexism.

The Survivors of the Clotilda: The Lost Stories of the Last Captives of the American Slave Trade. By Hannah Durkin. 2024. Amistad.

Durkin unearthed the long-lost tales of Africans brought to Alabama on the *Clotilda* in 1860 and recounts their experiences surviving enslavement and the Civil War.

True Believer: Hubert Humphrey's Quest for a More Just America. By James Traub. 2024. Basic.

Traub offers a complete account of the underappreciated Hubert Humphrey, elucidating how his compassion and liberalism shaped his political career as a mayor, U.S. senator, and vice president.

Art from *The Rebel's Clinic.*

Top 10

Memoirs

The 10 most exceptional memoirs from the last year show writers' lives intersecting with art, love, basketball, music, family, grief, and so much more, to dazzling literary effect.

The Chair and the Valley: A Memoir of Trauma, Healing, and the Outdoors. By Banning Lyon. 2024. Penguin/Open Field.

In this survival story like no other, outdoor guide Lyon details what led him as a teenager in the 1980s to a psychiatric facility, the violent abuse he suffered disguised as treatment, and the eventual rebuilding of his life.

Everything/Nothing/Someone. By Alice Carrière. 2023. Spiegel & Grau.

Carrière's creatively exceptional memoir of growing up with artist parents is also about how people make art and build family, how philosophy intersects with lived experience, and how people try and fail to connect.

Here After. By Amy Lin. 2024. Zibby.

Lin's memoir of losing her 32-year-old husband while dealing with a serious medical diagnosis of her own will make readers think about grief in profound and possibly altogether-new ways.

How to Say Babylon. By Safiya Sinclair. 2023. Simon & Schuster.

Complex feelings of familial loyalty and a deep desire to explore the world beyond Jamaica, known as Babylon by her father, permeates poet Sinclair's radiant and insightful narrative.

A Man of Two Faces: A Memoir, a History, a Memorial. By Viet Thanh Nguyen. 2023. Grove.

In this eviscerating and tender montage of memoir, facts, dissent, and clarification, Nguyen delves into the racism embedded within the American Dream that made his being both Vietnamese and American a difficult balancing act.

My Black Country: A Journey through Country Music's Black Past, Present, and Future. By Alice Randall. 2024. Atria/Black Privilege.

Novelist and songwriter Randall's narrative is informed by a deep love of country music, her commitment to undoing an ugly legacy of whitewashing, and her determination to change the face of Nashville for herself and other Black artists.

There's Always This Year: On Basketball and Ascension. By Hanif Abdurraqib. 2024. Random.

Basketball is the heart of Abdurraqib's unique, far-ranging, and exhilarating inquiry that becomes a galvanic drive through the intricacies of family, community, belief, and dreams.

An Unfinished Love Story: A Personal History of the 1960s. By Doris Kearns Goodwin. 2024. Simon & Schuster.

Kearns Goodwin mines her personal archives and those of her late, presidential-advisor husband in this memoir of beguiling intimacy and effervescent appreciation for a marriage built on profound mutual engagement with politics, social struggles, and each other.

Whiskey Tender. By Deborah Jackson Taffa. 2024. Harper.

Taffa, a citizen of the Quechan (Yuma) Nation and Laguna Pueblo, recounts her childhood and teenage years in New Mexico, threading together intimate family troubles with highly charged historical accounts of violence against Indigenous Americans as well as fierce resistance.

Wild Life: Finding My Purpose in an Untamed World. By Rae Wynn-Grant. 2024. Zando.

Wildlife ecologist Wynn-Grant presents a fascinating memoir about love of the natural world, the barriers facing aspiring Black women scientists, and her influential career, encouraging readers to learn about and honor Earth's ecosystems.

Art from *The Farmer's Lawyer.*

Legal Eagles

by Donna Seaman

A legal eagle, a term coined in 1869, refers to a highly skilled and astute lawyer. As we find ourselves in a time of numerous headline court cases, we turn to biographies and memoirs illuminating the lives, missions, and accomplishments of law professionals, especially those who overcame adversity to work for the common good.

Demand the Impossible: One Lawyer's Pursuit of Equal Justice for All. By Robert L. Tsai. 2024. Norton.

Law professor Tsai traces the groundbreaking and influential career of lawyer Stephen Bright, who directed the Southern Center for Human Rights for decades and has not only defended and helped individuals at a disadvantage in the legal system, but also reshaped legal thought and law.

Everyone against Us: Public Defenders and the Making of American Justice. By Allen Goodman. 2023. Univ. of Chicago.

Former public defender Goodman represented the accused in Chicago and Cook County, Illinois, and now shares what he learned about a system stacked against defendants and asserts the immense value of often-maligned public defenders.

The Farmer's Lawyer: The North Dakota Nine and the Fight to Save the Family Farm. By Sarah Vogel. 2021. Bloomsbury.

In the 1980s, nine farmers called on newbie lawyer Vogel as they launched a class-action lawsuit in North Dakota against a federal lending agency threatening foreclosure on many multigenerational family farms. Vogel's suspenseful memoir recounts how the case eventually changed federal law.

First: Sandra Day O'Connor. By Evan Thomas. 2019. Random.

O'Connor's 1981 appointment as the first woman to serve on the Supreme Court was the culmination of a hard-fought battle for professional advancement that Thomas fully chronicles as he covers O'Connor's life and enduring contributions to American jurisprudence.

The Great Dissenter: The Story of John Marshall Harlan, America's Judicial Hero. By Peter S. Canellos. 2021. Simon & Schuster.

Named after Chief Justice John Marshall, Harlan followed his namesake onto the Supreme Court, serving from 1877 to 1911 and earning the sobriquet "The Great Dissenter" for his arguments in some of the most consequential cases in U.S. history.

Haben: The Deafblind Woman Who Conquered Harvard Law. By Haben Girma. 2019. Twelve.

Lawyer and activist Girma shares her struggles navigating an ableist world as a person with disabilities, beginning with her California childhood as the child of Eritrean immigrants to her becoming the first deafblind graduate of Harvard Law School to her winning groundbreaking cases and speaking out for the rights of people with disabilities.

I Am These Truths: A Memoir of Identity, Justice, and Living between Worlds. By Sunny Hostin and Charisse Jones. 2020. Harper.

Hostin, now a best-selling novelist (*Summer on Highland Beach*, 2024), candidly recounts growing up African American and Puerto Rican in New York, becoming a lawyer advocating for the underprivileged, a federal prosecutor,

a legal affairs TV journalist, and a popular cohost of the Emmy-winning show *The View*.

Invisible: The Forgotten Story of the Black Woman Lawyer Who Took Down America's Most Powerful Mobster. By Stephen L. Carter. 2018. Holt.

Eunice Carter, best-selling crime-writer Stephen L. Carter's grandmother and one of a tiny handful of female African American lawyers, was connected professionally and socially with the most influential people of the day, and, as a protégé of New York district attorney Thomas E. Dewey, was instrumental in prosecuting the infamous Lucky Luciano in 1936.

Jane Crow: The Life of Pauli Murray. By Rosalind Rosenberg. 2017. Oxford.

Activist and lawyer Murray spent her life publicly fighting discrimination against Blacks and women, while privately fighting for her own sense of sexual identity. Her legal scholarship formed the basis for Thurgood Marshall's challenge to school segregation in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education*.

Just Pursuit: A Black Prosecutor's Fight for Fairness. By Laura Coates. 2022. Simon & Schuster.

As a Black female prosecutor, Coates was a voting rights attorney in the Civil Rights Division and an Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Department of Justice. Now a CNN host, Coates reveals how her personal experiences shaped her perspective on fairness and empathy, impartiality and legality.

Lady Justice: Women, the Law, and the Battle to Save America. By Dahlia Lithwick. 2022. Penguin Press.

Whip-smart and wickedly acerbic, lawyer and legal journalist Lithwick profiles the best-of-the-best women lawyers whose dedication, drive, and determination have led to monumental changes, including household names Sally Yates, Stacey Abrams, and Anita Hill, along with vote strategist Nina Perales and ACLU reproductive rights attorney Brigitte Amiri.

The Making of a Justice: Reflections on My First 94 Years. By John Paul Stevens. 2019. Little, Brown.

Having retired from the U.S. Supreme Court in 2010, Stevens recalls his Chicago upbringing, WWII naval service, legal career in the 1950s and 1960s, and 35 years on the bench, casting light on the court's internal processes, key cases, and caustic opinions.

Nine Black Robes: Inside the Supreme Court's Drive to the Right and Its Historic Consequences. By Joan Biskupic. 2023. Morrow.

Veteran SCOTUS journalist Biskupic follows her previous biographies of Supreme Court justices, including *The Chief* (2019), with an up-to-the-minute, laser-focused examination of the Court as a whole during what is arguably its most contentious and controversial iteration to date.

No Human Is Illegal: An Attorney on the Front Lines of the Immigration War. By J. J. Mulligan Sepúlveda. 2019. Melville.

Immigration lawyer Sepúlveda captures the challenges and intricacies of the immigration system through his interactions with immigration officers, judges, government attorneys, and courageous immigrants who are caught in a legal web that has become overtly politicized.

Nobody's Victim: Fighting Psychos, Stalkers, Pervs, and Trolls. By Carrie Goldberg. 2019. Plume.

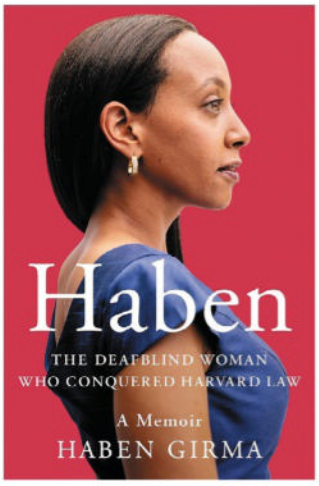
Victims' rights lawyer Goldberg's galvanizing memoir educates readers on the devastating realities of myriad cybercrimes and shares stories of psychos and stalkers in her own life, making it clear that being a survivor is what makes her such a fierce advocate for others.

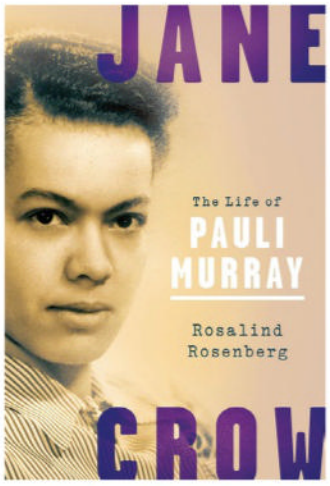
Ruth Bader Ginsburg. By Jane Sherron de Hart. 2018. Knopf.

Sherron de Hart details the accomplishments of then still-living Ruth Bader Ginsburg, tracking her keen grasp of legal argumentation as a law clerk, expert on gender equality, U.S. Appeals Court judge, and Supreme Court justice, emphasizing how the omnipresent sexism Ginsburg faced intensified her commitment to equal rights and fair treatment under the law for everyone.

The Watergate Girl: My Fight for Truth and Justice against a Criminal President. By Jill Wine-Banks. 2020. Holt.

Wine-Banks recounts her experiences as the lone female lawyer on the staff of Watergate special prosecutors Archibald Cox and Leon Jaworski, the first female General Counsel of the U.S. Army, and the first woman executive director of the American Bar Association.





Reserve These Reads

Adult

Get your hands on these hotly anticipated books, all out this month.

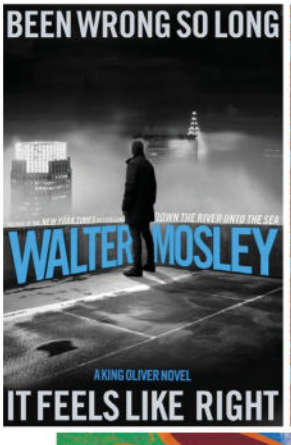
Fiction

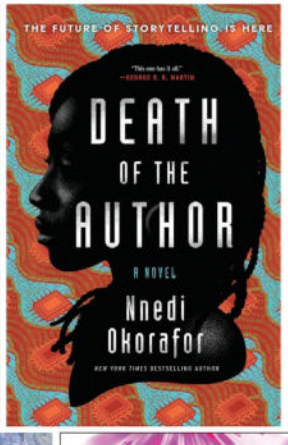
Been Wrong So Long It Feels Like Right. By Walter Mosley. Little, Brown/Mulholland.

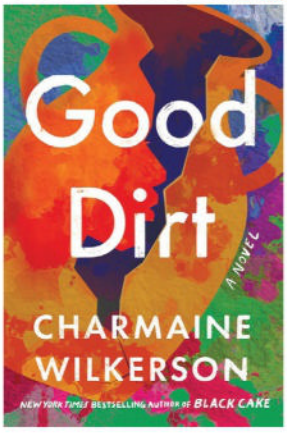
The latest in Mosley's King Oliver series (after *Every Man a King*, 2023) finds NYPD detective-turned-PI Joe King Oliver on the trail of a billionaire's wife and daughter while his 94-year-old grandmother asks Joe to track down her son, Chief, who is Joe's estranged father.

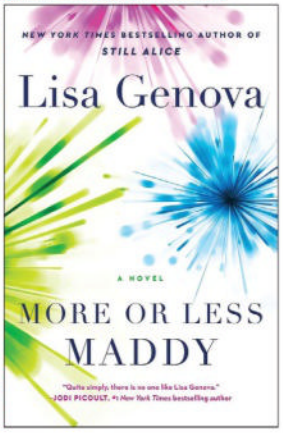
Death of the Author. By Nnedi Okorafor. Morrow.

Science-fiction giant Okorafor offers a metanovel about an author of midlist literary fiction who decides to write a sf epic, and to her shock, it becomes a megahit complete with a fandom demanding a sequel. This plotline is intercut with selections from the sf novel itself.









Art from *Life of Harod the Great.*

Good Dirt. By Charmaine Wilkerson. Ballantine.

As a child, Ebby lost her brother and a family heirloom in one mysterious tragedy. Heartbreak puts her family in the spotlight again in the second novel from the author of the best-selling Read with Jenna book pick, *Black Cake* (2022).

The Life of Herod the Great. By Zora Neale Hurston. Amistad.

This never-before-published novel by the great Hurston reframes the life of the Biblical king Herod as a beloved ruler. Her rediscovered works, from *Baracoon* (2018) to *Hitting a Straight Lick with a Crooked Stick* (2020), have generated lots of interest, and this fictional retelling is bound to draw readers in.

More or Less Maddy. By Lisa Genova. Gallery/Scout.

Neuroscientist and author Genova defined medically informed fiction with *Still Alice* (2009). Now, she tells the story of a first-year college student navigating depression, mania, and a bipolar diagnosis.

Onyx Storm. By Rebecca Yarros. Entangled/Red Tower.

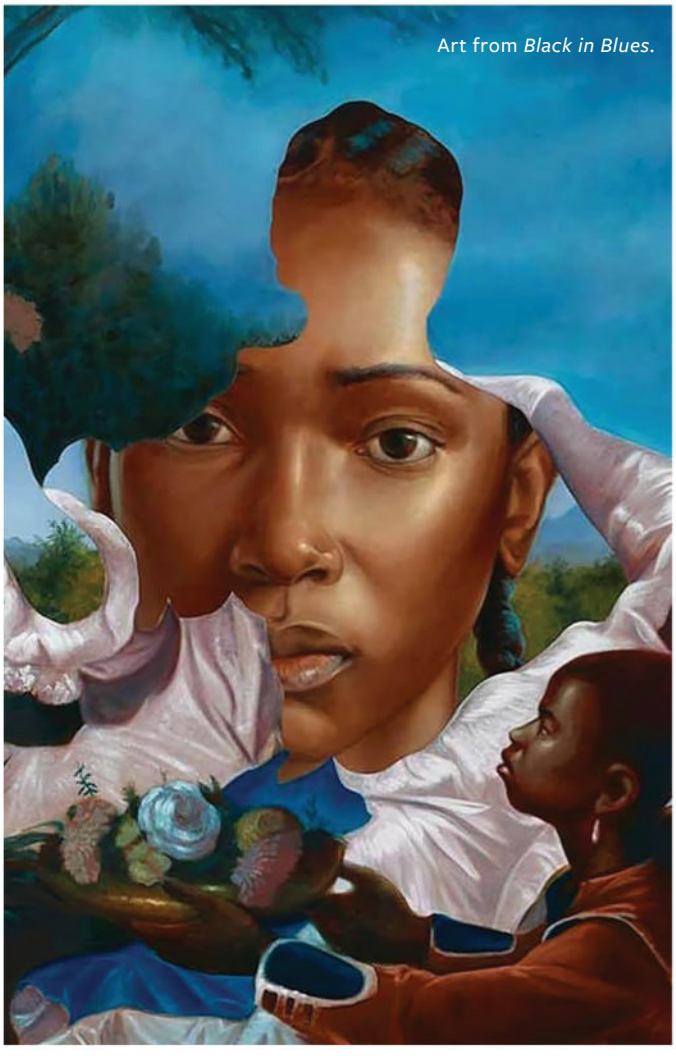
The third volume of Yarros' mega-popular Empyrean romantasy series (*Fourth Wing*, 2023, and *Iron Flame*, 2024) continues the exploits of Violet Sorrengail, a chronically ill woman who gets caught up in dragon-riding at a war college.

Presumed Guilty. By Scott Turow. Grand Central.

The recent AppleTV+ adaptation of Turow's *Presumed Innocent* became the streaming site's most-watched drama ever. Continuing that story, this thriller picks up years later as Rusty Sabich must deal with a disappearance that threatens his life all over again.

We Do Not Part. By Han Kang. Tr. by e. yaewon and Paige Aniyah Morris. Hogarth.

In the latest from the newest Nobel laureate, an author is plagued by nightmares after the publication of her last novel until a close friend, with whom she was going to collaborate on a film, begs her to go to Jeju Island, where she is visited by the friend's spirit who reveals truth about a massacre by the U.S.-backed Korean military.



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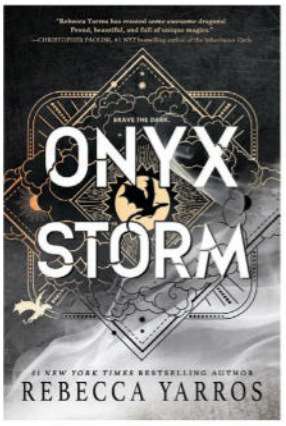
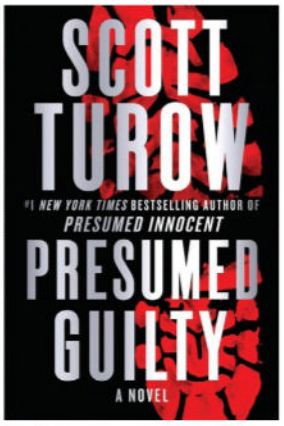
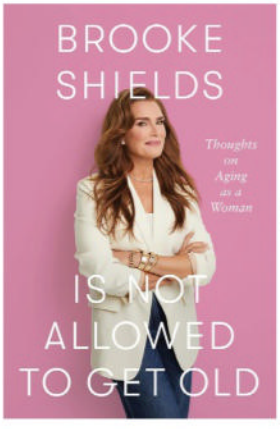
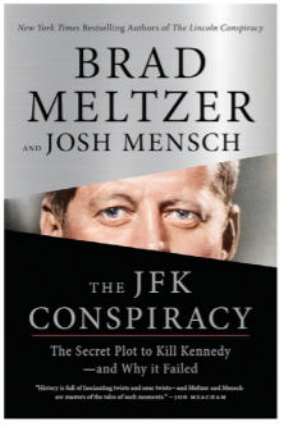








Nonfiction

Black in Blues: How a Color Tells the Story of My People. Imani Perry. Ecco.

National Book Award–winner Perry (*South to America*, 2022) meditates on the color blue and its relationship to Blackness, culture, art, craft, and more.

Brooke Shields Is Not Allowed to Get Old: Thoughts on Aging as a Woman. By Brooke Shields. Flatiron.

In a book that is part memoir, part research project, and part treatise, the iconic Shields takes on aging as she shares vulnerable moments and delves into the dangerous systemic factors that keep women down.

Dare I Say It: Everything I Wish I'd Known about Menopause. Naomi Watts. Crown.

Actress Watts opens up about her menopause journey, which began in her mid-thirties, in this empowering health memoir.

The JFK Conspiracy: The Secret Plot to Kill Kennedy—and Why It Failed. By Brad Meltzer and Josh Mensch. Flatiron.

Best-selling thriller-writer Meltzer and his coauthor Mensch (who brought us *The Lincoln Conspiracy*, 2020 and *The Nazi Conspiracy*, 2023) draw back the curtain on a failed assassination attempt that happened before JFK took office.

January 2025

The Top Ten Adult Fiction and Nonfiction Chosen Monthly by America's Library Staff

Find out more at www.LibraryReads.org

TOP PICK

Good Dirt: A Novel
Charmaine Wilkerson
(Ballantine Books)

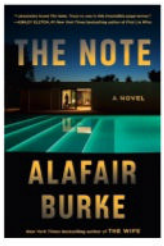
When Ebby was a child, she witnessed her older brother's murder. After being ditched at the altar years later, she escapes to France only to run into her ex-fiancé, Henry, and his new girlfriend. Ebby is forced to confront Henry and the trauma of her brother's death. Through a treasured heirloom pottery jar, the novel chronicles the history of Ebby's family and its resilience.

—Alison Zaya, Pollard Memorial Library, MA
NoveList read-alike: *Acts of Forgiveness* by Maura Cheeks

Out of the Woods: A Novel
Hannah Bonam-Young
(Dell)

In this follow-up to *Out on a Limb*, high school sweethearts Sarah and Caleb find that over a decade into marriage, their relationship has changed. They resolve to rekindle things through a weeklong couples retreat, camping in the wilderness. This second-chance romance features flashbacks and great character backstories that elevate it from the typical trope.

—Cari Dubiel, Twinsburg Public Library, OH
NoveList read-alike: *Before I Let Go* by Kennedy Ryan



The Note: A Novel
Alafair Burke
(Knopf)

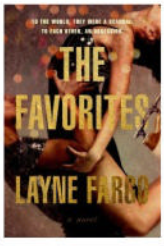
Three friends reunite in the Hamptons only to have chaos ensue after a night spent out drinking. The fast-moving narrative features multiple narrators and lots of unexpected twists. Burke has delivered another excellent psychological thriller.

—Cyndi Larsen, Avon Free Public Library, CT
NoveList read-alike: *We Were Never Here* by Andrea Bartz

Babylonia
Costanza Casati
(Sourcebooks Landmark)

Semiramis was abandoned by a fragile mother and raised by a cruel stepfather. She grows up learning that to belong in a male-dominated society, she has to think and fight like a man. The author's research, vivid descriptions, and memorable characters make for a great read.

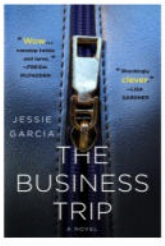
—Linda Sullivan, Mission Viejo Library, CA
NoveList read-alike: *Wings of Fury* by Emily R. King



The Favorites: A Novel
Layne Fargo
(Random House)

This novel looks at ambition and the elite figure skating world with a sharp eye and a fierce writing style. It's a dishy story of an Olympic ice-dancing couple with some truly romantic moments, the pacing of a thriller, and a documentary interview style that effectively propels the story along.

—Jodi Prather, Bartholomew County Public Library, IN
NoveList read-alike: *Carrie Soto is Back* by Taylor Jenkins Reid



The Business Trip
Jessie Garcia
(St. Martin's Press)

Stephanie, heading to a work conference, meets Jasmine, who is running from an abusive relationship. They find themselves connected to Trent, a raging narcissist. When both women turn up missing, evidence is found at Trent's house. This fast-paced plot will keep readers guessing until the very last page of the book.

—Melissa Turner, Maricopa Library & Cultural Center, AZ
NoveList read-alike: *Leave the Girls Behind* by Jacqueline Bublitz

Temple of Swoon
Jo Segura
(Berkley)

This delightfully madcap adventure through dangerous jungles and beautifully realized relationships will appeal to fans of Segura's first romance, but can be read on its own. Perfect for patrons who are looking for the quirky banter of India Holton or the academic wit of Ali Hazelwood.

—Clay Chiment, Ulysses Philomathic Library, Trumansburg, NY
NoveList read-alike: *The Jewel of the Isle* by Kerry Rea

Water Moon: A Novel
Samantha Sotto Yambao
(Del Rey)

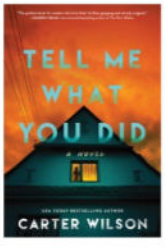
At Hana's pawnshop in Tokyo, people can sell their regrets. While Hana provides relief for them, she desperately seeks answers for her father's disappearance. Enter Key and his scientific mind. A fascinating blend of magical realism, mystery, romance, and hope.

—Crystal Faris, Kansas City Public Library, MO
NoveList read-alike: *Sorcery and Small Magics* by Maiga Doocy

The In-Between Bookstore
Edward Underhill
(Avon)

In this aching "what if?" story, Darby goes back to his Midwest hometown and finds everything has changed but the In Between Bookstore—in fact, when he walks in, the person behind the counter is the sixteen-year-old version of himself. A tender look at how events change and create us—and how not even the closest people to us can know what's going on in our heads.

—Jessica Trotter, Capital Area District Libraries, MI
NoveList read-alike: *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig



Tell Me What You Did
Carter Wilson
(Poisoned Pen Press)

Poe, a popular true-crime podcaster, has the tables turned on her when a caller claims to know her past. Poe took out her mother's killer years ago, but the caller says she got the wrong person. This tightly wound cat-and-mouse game asks all kinds of moral questions, and readers will enjoy the many twists and turns.

—Kimberly McGee, Lake Travis Community Library, Austin, TX
NoveList read-alike: Listen for the Lie by Amy Tintera

Bonus pick:

Wake Up and Open Your Eyes
Clay McLeod Chapman
(Quirk Books)

Notable Nonfiction:

Y2K: How the 2000s Became Everything (Essays on the Future That Never Was)
Collette Shade
(Dey Street Books)

Be sure to check out our social media for the Bonus Pick annotations!

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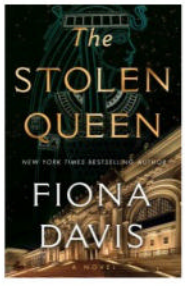
January 2025
HALL OF FAME TITLES

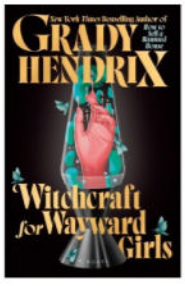
The LibraryReads Hall of Fame designation honors authors who have had multiple titles appear on the monthly list since 2013.

Find out more at www.LibraryReads.org/HOF

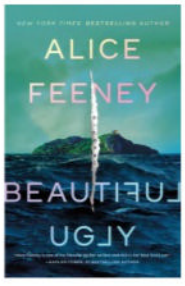
Beg, Borrow, or Steal: A Novel
Sarah Adams
(Delacorte Press)



The Stolen Queen: A Novel
Fiona Davis
(Dutton)

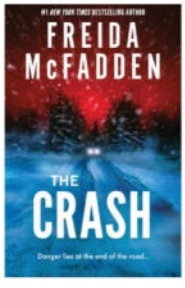


Witchcraft for Wayward Girls
Grady Hendrix
(Berkley)



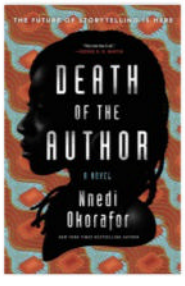
Beautiful Ugly
Alice Feeney
(Flatiron Books)

Once Smitten, Twice Shy
Chloe Liese
(Berkley)

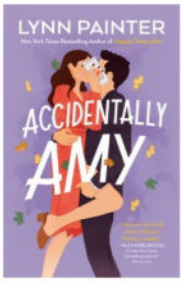


The Crash
Frieda McFadden
(Poisoned Pen Press)

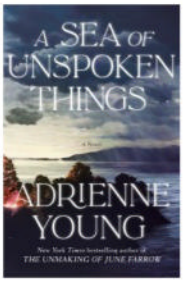
Adrift in Currents Clean and Clear
Seanan McGuire
(Tordotcom)



Death of the Author: A Novel
Nnedi Okorafor
(William Morrow)



Accidentally Amy
Lynn Painter
(Berkley)

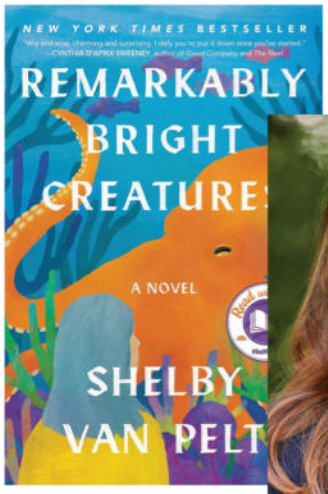


A Sea of Unspoken Things: A Novel
Adrienne Young
(Delacorte Press)

PBS BOOKS

PBS Books Readers Club

PBS Books Readers Club celebrates its one-year anniversary this month as it reads *Remarkably Bright Creatures.* Cohosts Fred, Lauren, Heather, and Princess interview author Shelby Van Pelt and explore the dynamic relationship between Tova and Marcellus, a giant Pacific octopus who lives at the aquarium. It's a charming and witty exploration of friendship, reckoning, and hope that traces a widow's unlikely connection with an octopus. Read along and join the conversation on Wednesday, January 29, at 8 p.m. ET. The hosts also chat about the upcoming Season 5 of internationally acclaimed *All Creatures Great and Small* series, which premieres on Sunday, January 12, at 9 p.m. ET. A new TV series adaptation based on James Herriot's beloved book, this season has heart, a picturesque setting, and a charming cast, delivering drama both comforting and entertaining. It is a show that's great for the whole family!



Carl the Collector

There is a new animated PBS Kids series called *Carl the Collector*, created by *The New York Times* best-selling illustrator and author, Zachariah OHora. It aims to nurture empathy and celebrates neurodiverse characters. PBS Books National Director Heather-Marie Montilla interviews OHora, discussing the warmhearted autistic raccoon Carl, who enjoys collecting things and loves his friends and family in Fuzzytown. OHora talks about the inspiration for his new show, as well as some of his recent books including *Whalesong: The True Story of the Musician Who Talked to Orcas.* Watch the program on Wednesday, January 15, at 8 p.m. ET on the PBS Books website, Facebook, or YouTube.

Program Highlights

Great Migrations

GREAT MIGRATIONS: A PEOPLE ON THE MOVE is a new four-part docuseries from Emmy-nominated executive producer, host, and writer Dr. Henry Louis Gates Jr. that will premiere on Tuesday, January 28, 2025, at 9 p.m. ET on PBS, PBS.org, and the PBS app. The series tells the story of African American movement over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and how it has shaped our nation by exploring the meaning behind those movements. What political or economic pressures inspire people to move? Is it more often inspired by hope or fear? Is there even such a thing as a promised land?

Human beings have always moved en masse. Since the beginning of human existence, movement has defined how we evolved and created identities, communities, and nations-states. Migration is not unique to any single ethnicity or group, but it is a deeply profound aspect of the modern African American experience simply because Black people were denied movement for so long. Theirs was a forced migration from Africa, followed by centuries of enslavement that kept them in place. In being denied movement, they were denied their humanity.

After emancipation, the migratory spirit took hold in this new space of freedom, and many African Americans uprooted themselves from all that was familiar to move to northern cities (sometimes stopping first in southern cities) to build entirely new lives—a decision that dramatically changed the fabric of American culture and society. It was an epic migration of people that began in the late nineteenth century when it was clear that the early promises of Reconstruction would not be fulfilled, and accelerated as the century progressed. Underlying this courageous act was the abiding belief in American opportunity, as well as a belief in their own capacity to better their lives, and the lives of their children. In some ways, it has never really ended. Throughout GREAT MIGRATIONS, Gates interviews dozens of journalists, scholars, professors, and experts to uncover how the dramatic three mass migrations have shaped the African American experience. The episodes are as follows: 1) "Exodus," exploring the first wave of the Great Migration (1910–40), 2) "Streets Paved in Gold," examining the second wave of the Great Migration (1940–70), 3) "One Way Ticket Back," showing the reverse migration of Black Americans to the South, and 4) "Coming to America," telling the story of African and Caribbean immigrants in the United States. The series includes notable figures including political leader Stacey Abrams, artist George F. Baker III, journalist Charles Blow, and more.

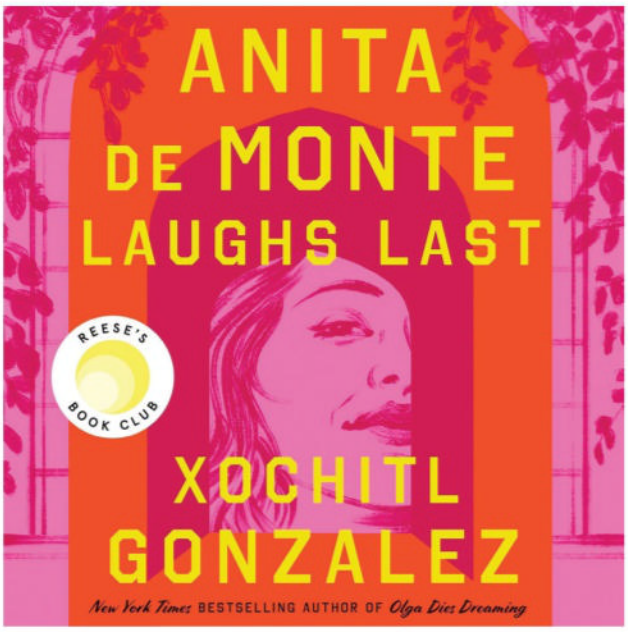
GREAT MIGRATIONS is a production of McGee Media and Inkwell Media, in association with WETA Washington, DC.

Top Adult Audiobook & Listen-alikes

Anita de Monte Laughs Last, by Xochitl Gonzalez

by Heather Booth

Audiobook listeners know that it's a rare audiobook that truly elevates an already excellent story with performances that bring every page to life. From the moment narrator Jessica Pimentel's Anita—an artist in the 1980s who rises to prominence before her suspicious death—opens *Anita de Monte Laughs Last*, by Xochitl Gonzalez, with her simmering frustration, there can be no doubt about the effect on Anita of subtle and overt discrimination. It's the same for Raquel, the present-day artist studying Anita's husband, a white sculptor acquitted of Anita's murder. Pimentel is known for her role playing Maria Ruiz on *Orange Is the New Black*. Her reading is dynamic, and her energy pushes the story forward even after Anita's death. Jonathan Gregg captures Jack's entitlement and jealousy with a similarly volatile range. In contrast, Stacy Gonzalez's Raquel is comparatively subdued until she, too, has had enough. Listeners looking for more audio that viscerally highlights multiple character perspectives will enjoy these listen-alikes.



My Mother's House. By Francesca Momplaisir. Read by a full cast. 2020. Books on Tape.

It opens with the mellifluous Dion Graham voicing a house of horrors in Queens, New York, the home of Lucien and Marie-Ange, a once "compassionate and savvy young couple," who initially provided a haven for fellow Haitian immigrants. The impressive Karen Chilton portrays Lucien in a rebellious act of giving voice to the countless women manipulated, hunted, tormented, and enslaved in the too-many decades Lucien has thrived. Janina Edwards achingly haunts as Sol, the sole prisoner allowed narrative agency.

Sadie. By Courtney Summers. Read by a full cast. 2018. Macmillan. Gr. 9–12.

A stupendous full production amplifies Summers' already astounding novel tracking the path of Sadie, a girl who sets her mind to solving her sister's murder. Especially affecting is the podcast series intertwined with the narrative. The ensemble proves utterly spectacular.

Saving Ruby King. By Catherine Adel West. 2020. Read by a full cast. 2020. Harper.

A dead woman opens West's startling, haunting debut. Two fathers, two daughters, and the building housing Chicago's Calvary Hope Christian Church will unravel her unfortunate murder, revealing generations of secrets and violence that culminate in young Ruby King cradling her mother, Alice's, dying body. Kim Staunton as Alice is old beyond her years. Adam Lazarre-White growls and threatens throughout. Their daughter, Ruby, is made both steely and vulnerable by Imani Parks.

Whale Fall. By Elizabeth O'Connor. Read by a full cast. 2024. Books on Tape.

In 1938, on a remote Welsh island, 18-year-old Manod seeks a bigger life. After a beached whale unsettles local routines, English ethnographers Edward and Joan arrive, offering Manod that opportunity. Gwyneth Keyworth embodies young Manod as she scrutinizes, ponders, plans, and even sings! Jot Davies is breathtaking as authoritative, awed, blustering Edward; Gabrille Glaister resonates as Joan, who inspires and manipulates Manod. Dyfrig Morris and Nick Griffiths display notable versatility in fully produced, appropriately aged "transcriptions" of folklore, stories, and customs.

Top Youth Audiobook & Listen-alikes

Better Must Come, by Desmond Hall

by Heather Booth

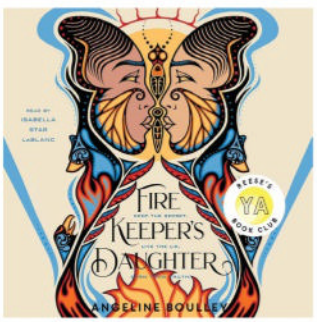
The mystery at the center of *Better Must Come*, by Desmond Hall, is only one element that makes it a notable listen. This audio carries listeners along with a clear "narrator" voice plus a range of beautifully executed Jamaican accents to paint the scene for Hall's story. Jaime Lincoln Smith's resonant voice, easily shifting accents, and rich characterization will help listeners connect strongly with the story of Deja, Gabriel, and the days that follow their chance encounter with a big bag of drug money.

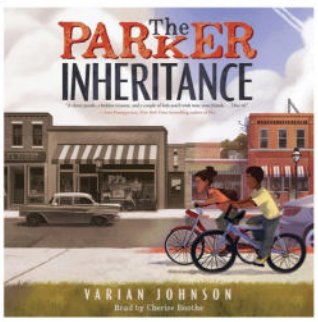
American Street. By Ibi Zoboi. Read by Robin Miles. 2017. Harper. Gr. 9–12.

Like Smith's, Miles' voice is deep and rich and slides easily from Fabiola's Haitian accent to the bold tones of the Detroiters she meets as she struggles to begin her life in the U.S., while her mother is detained by immigration.

Firekeeper's Daughter. By Angeline Boulley. Read by Isabella Star LaBlanc. 2021. Macmillan Audio. Gr. 10–12.

The 2021 *Booklist* Top of the List Audio for Youth winner shares many characteristics with this year's. Daunis is caught between cultures and allegiances when she is approached to assist FBI agents with the investigation of a drug crime in the Indigenous Michigan community where she lives, but isn't tribally enrolled. LaBlanc's reading is sensitive and her work with Ojibwe words and phrases is fluid, adding to the world of the audio.





The Parker Inheritance. By Varian Johnson. Read by Cherise Boothe. 2018. Scholastic. Gr. 5–7.

For younger listeners looking for a mystery with fully realized voices, Johnson's dual–time line tale fits the bill. Boothe keeps the nuances of the two time periods distinct, and shifts through subtleties in accents for the two sleuthing main characters.

The Sun Is Also a Star. By Nicola Yoon. Read by a full cast. 2016. Listening Library. Gr. 8–12.

Better Must Come draws readers in, in part, by giving glimpses of the perspectives of many characters. In Yoon's sprawling and brilliant audio, multiple voices similarly convey the swirling world around the two main characters.

Twenty-Four Seconds from Now . . . By Jason Reynolds. Read by Guy Lockard. 2024. Simon & Schuster Audio. Gr. 9–12.

Lockard is the go-to narrator for Reynolds' writing when he isn't narrating his own work. His voice here, tracing the love story of two teens, leads up to their facing a significant decision about their relationship. The respect and deep emotion he conveys for the couple is moving.

Listen Up

Armchair Travel on Audio

by Terry Hong

If cars, trains, ships, or airplanes aren't exactly your thing but you're still longing for travel, consider quelling your wanderlust with these aural adventures guided by babymooners, royalty, and—most memorably—refugees.

The Bump. By Sydney Karger. Read by Ryan Spahn and Michael Urie. 2024. Books on Tape.

Spahn and Urie embody dads-to-be who hope to rekindle their stagnating relationship with a cross-country babymoon—Provincetown, Boston, Chicago, Las Vegas, Palm Springs—before their child's California birth.

Daughters of Shandong. By Eve J. Chung. Read by Yu-Li Alice Shen. 2024. Books on Tape.

Shen effortlessly manifests three generations of Chinese women. In 1948, wealthy matriarch Nai Nai's family flees the rampaging Communists, but *without* her spineless son's wife and daughters. The abandonment launches a perilous odyssey through Qingdao, Hong Kong, and Taiwan for the left-behinds.

The Guncle Abroad. By Steven Rowley. Read by the author. 2024. Books on Tape.

While he's filming in London, "Gay Uncle Patrick" receives the summons for his brother Greg's upcoming Lake Como nuptials to an Italian royal. Greg needs "help with the kids," facilitating a triumvirate reunion gallivanting through Europe. Rowley creates another ambrosial aural delight.

Lies and Weddings. By Kevin Kwan. Read by Jing Lusi. 2024. Books on Tape.

Kwan channels Anthony Trollope's *Doctor Thorne* for the second of his Cities trilogy. *Crazy Rich Asians*' celluloid alum Lusi expertly takes the mic and is particularly entertaining as the Hong Kong–born matriarch of a British dynasty plotting her children's royal matches across Hawaii, Morocco, L.A., London, and Venice.

Road to the Salt Sea. By Samuel Kóláwolé. Read by Atta Otigba. July 2024. HarperAudio.

Seasoned voice actor Otigba's resonating Nigerian accent enlivens Kóláwolé's searing debut. Murder forces Able God on a treacherous escape that's allegedly guaranteed to get him to Europe, but the cost of survival across Nigeria, Niger, and Libya to Italy will prove impossible for too many.

Nonfiction

Accordion Eulogies: A Memoir of Music, Migration, and Mexico. By Noé Álvarez. Read by Asa Siegel. 2024. HighBridge.

Bilingual Siegel is a solemn cipher, empathically voicing Álvarez's search for his elusive grandfather Eulogio through his instrument, the accordion. Álvarez explores zydeco in Louisiana, meets a Texas accordion maker, discovers British accordionists, and in Mexico, repeatedly escapes dangers in his quest.

At the Edge of Empire: A Family's Reckoning with China. By Edward Wong. Read by Will Dao and the author. 2024. Books on Tape.

New York Times correspondent Wong makes an elegant debut, gloriously melding turbulent Chinese history, his immigrant father's tumultuous personal journey, and his own global encounters unearthing his family's stories. Stage-trained Dao ensures an immersive listen.

Bird Milk & Mosquito Bones. By Priyanka Mattoo. Read by the author. 2024. Books on Tape.

Peripatetic writer/filmmaker/producer (and now audiobook narrator) Mattoo was "raised in a magical family, in a magical place, at a magical time," but political and religious conflagrations scattered the extended family from Kashmir. Mattoo's essays detail peregrinations since, including Saudi Arabia, Britain, New York, Ann Arbor, Italy, and L.A.

Top 10

Biographies & Memoirs for Youth

This list of biographies and memoirs is highlighted by dazzlingly illustrated picture books and transformative memoirs.

Bless the Blood: A Cancer Memoir. By Walela Nehanda. 2024. Penguin/Kokila. Gr. 10–12.

Black, queer, nonbinary writer and activist Nehanda chronicles, in poetry and short essays, their difficult journey through cancer and mental-health issues stemming from familial abuse and generational trauma.

Born Naughty: My Childhood in China. By Jin Wang and Tony Johnston. Illus. by Anisi Baigude. 2024. Random/Anne Schwartz. Gr. 2–5.

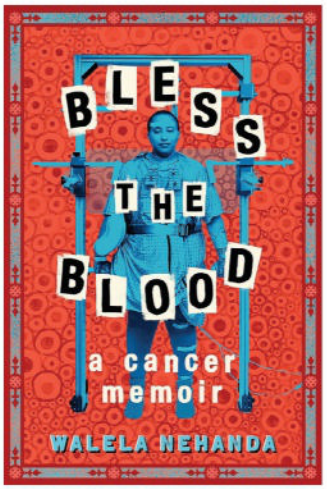
Bursting with delightful shenanigans, merry adventures, and family love, this memoir follows eight-year-old Jin Wang's experiences in her Mongolian village in 1982.

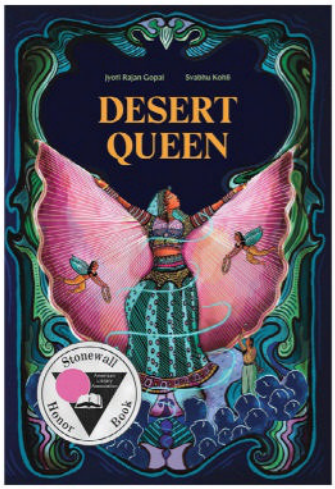
Desert Queen. By Jyoti Rajan Gopal. Illus. by Svabhu Kohli. 2023. Levine Querido. K–Gr. 4.

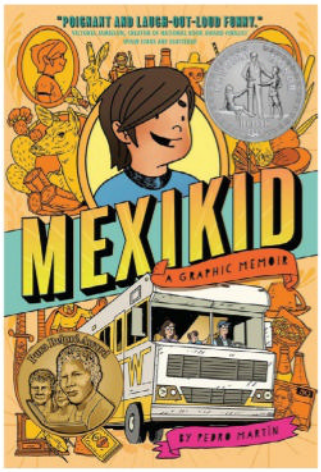
This one-of-a-kind picture book paints a stirringly intimate and reverential portrait of the late drag performer known as Queen Harish, the "Whirling Desert Queen of Rajasthan."

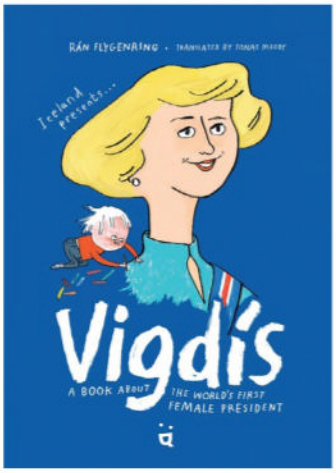
Loud and Proud: The Life of Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm. By Lesa Cline-Ransome. Illus. by Kaylani Juanita. 2023. Simon & Schuster/Paula Wiseman. Gr. 1–3.

This colorfully illustrated introduction to pioneering activist and politician Shirley Chisholm ranges from her years as a "bossy" tot through to her career and retirement.









Mexikid: A Graphic Memoir. By Pedro Martín. Art by the author. 2023. Dial. Gr. 5–8.

In this graphic memoir balancing comedy and meaningful emotional growth, Pedro and his big Mexican American family take an epic, comical road trip to his abuelo's ranch in Jalisco.

A Quantum Life (Adapted for Young Adults): My Unlikely Journey from the Street to the Stars. By Hakeem Oluseyi and Joshua Horwitz. 2023. Delacorte. Gr. 8–11.

This absorbing, suspenseful memoir depicts the author's journey of transformation from neglected child of a drug dealer to celebrated Black astrophysicist.

Signs of Hope: The Revolutionary Art of Sister Corita Kent. By Mara Rockliff. Illus. by Melissa Sweet. 2024. Abrams. Gr. 1–3.

Sweet's bright, bold collage artwork is the perfect accompaniment to this story of Sister Corita Kent, the Catholic nun who became a pop-art sensation in the 1960s.

This Boy: The Early Lives of John Lennon and Paul McCartney. By Ilene Cooper. 2023. Viking. Gr. 5–8.

Cooper's joint biography, generously illustrated with period photographs, gives the fascinating account of how childhood friends John Lennon and Paul McCartney met and formed the Beatles.

Tiny Jumper: How Tiny Broadwick Created the Parachute Rip Cord. By Candy Dahl. Illus. by Maithili Joshi. 2023. little bee. Gr. 1–3.

This book portrays a pioneering aviator, Georgia Ann "Tiny" Broadwick, the first woman to jump from an airplane in flight, the "inventor" of the rip cord, and the first to show that fliers could survive a free fall.

Vigdís: A Book about the World's First Female President. By Rán Flygenring. Illus. by the author. Tr. by Jonas Moody. 2024. Helvetiq. Gr. 1–3.

In this inspiring account, a young writer sits with Vigdís Finnbogadóttir to chat about her rise to become Iceland's (and the world's) first woman president.

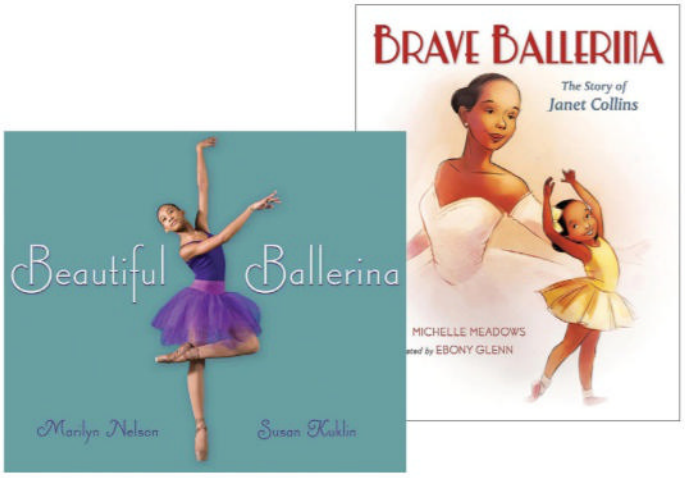
Art from *The Swans of Harlem.*

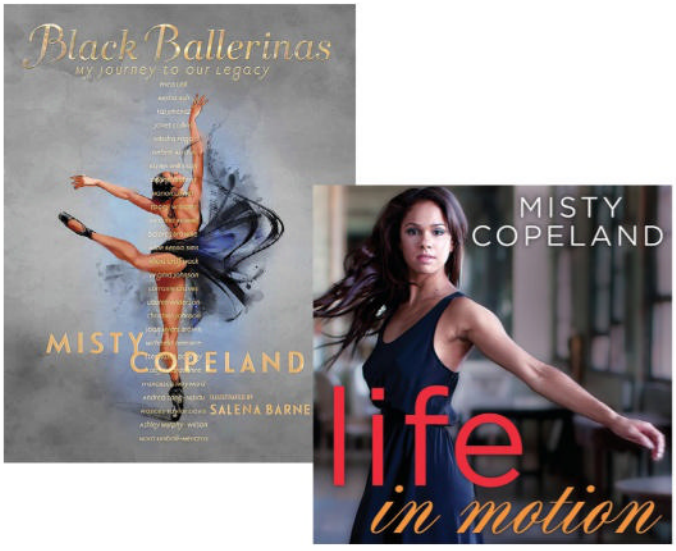
Read-alikes

Karen Valby's *The Swans of Harlem*

By Julia Smith

Readers of all ages deserve to know about dancers of color, both their place in history and their inspiring work today. These biographies and memoirs shine well-deserved spotlights on some of these astonishing artists.





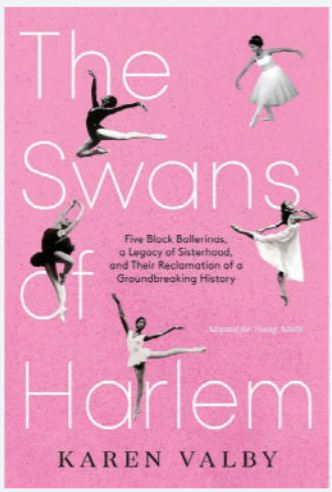
Beautiful Ballerina. By Marilyn Nelson. Illus. by Susan Kuklin. 2009. Scholastic. K–Gr. 3.

Nelson's moving poem directly addresses young dancers and harmoniously matches Kuklin's expressive photos of real-life students at the Dance Theatre of Harlem (DTH). Final notes about the DTH and short biographies of the girls who appear in the pages close this celebratory title.

Black Ballerinas: My Journey to Our Legacy. By Misty Copeland. Illus. by Salena Barnes. 2021. Aladdin. Gr. 3–6.

This gracefully illustrated collective biography showcases 27 BIPOC ballerinas who have inspired Copeland in her dance career. While discussing the lives and accomplishments of each entrant, Copeland entwines her own experiences and frankly discusses the limitations and emotional strain racism and colorism have placed on ballet dancers of color.

The Swans of Harlem (Adapted for Young Adults): Five Black Ballerinas, a Legacy of Sisterhood, and Their Reclamation of a Groundbreaking History. By Karen Valby. 2025. Delacorte. Gr. 7–12.


The Swans of Harlem
Five Black Ballerinas, a Legacy of Sisterhood, and Their Reclamation of a Groundbreaking History
KAREN VALBY

During the COVID-19 lockdown of 2020, five former dancers reconnected over Zoom to form the 152nd Street Black Ballet Legacy Council, determined to preserve the groundbreaking work and immense talent of Arthur Mitchell's Dance Theatre of Harlem (DTH). These women—Lydia Abarca, Gayle McKinney-Griffith, Sheila Rohan, Marcia Sells, and Karlya Shelton—were among its founding or early company members, yet history did not remember their names. Valby, a white journalist with two Black daughters involved in ballet, took notice of the Legacy Council and knew it was time for these women to resume their places in the spotlight. Structured in three acts, like a ballet, this powerful account is part cultural history, part biography as it traces the formation, rise, and decline of DTH through the experiences of these five ballerinas, as well as their continued importance to dancers of color today. The book's introduction states, "Black excellence is not a one-off but a spectacular ongoing fact," and the ensuing narrative underscores this truth over and over again through the astonishing accomplishments of these dancers in their own rights as well as in conjunction with the racism and colorism so ingrained in the world of classical ballet. While dancers and Misty Copeland admirers are the obvious audience, this will appeal equally to fans of forgotten histories, such as *Hidden Figures* (2016), by Margot Lee Shetterly. —*Julia Smith*

Brave Ballerina: The Story of Janet Collins. By Michelle Meadows. Illus. by Ebony Glenn. 2019. Holt. PreS–Gr. 2.

Told in verse, this picture-book biography of Janet Collins touches on the discrimination she encountered as a Black ballerina and her triumph over it, encapsulated by a final spread showing her on stage at the Metropolitan Opera House in 1951.

Katherine Dunham: Pioneer of Black Dance. By Barbara O'Connor. 2000. Carolrhoda. Gr. 5–8.

Katherine Dunham was one of the first choreographers to explore her African American roots through dance. O'Connor captures Dunham as a person and presents the challenges facing her as a visionary Black woman making her own way in mid-twentieth-century America.

Life in Motion: An Unlikely Ballerina; Young Readers Edition. By Misty Copeland. 2016. Aladdin. Gr. 4–8.

Copeland, the first African American to be a principal dancer for the American Ballet Theatre, shares her experiences growing up with little money in an unstable home and personal battles with racism in the traditionally white classical ballet world. A spirited, fierce memoir.

Maria Tallchief. By Christine Day. Illus. by Gillian Flint. 2021. Philomel. Gr. 2–4.

This biography from the She Persisted series introduces elementary-grade readers to the U.S.'s first Native American prima ballerina. The importance of her Osage Nation heritage shares the stage with her incredible accomplishments as a dancer.

My Story, My Dance: Robert Battle's Journey to Alvin Ailey. By Lesa Cline-Ransome. Illus. by James E. Ransome. 2015. Simon & Schuster/Paula Wiseman. Gr. 1–3.

Robert Battle's journey to become artistic director of the renowned African American dance company Alvin Ailey is an inspiring story, filled with lessons on following one's passion.

Savion! My Life in Tap. By Savion Glover and Bruce Weber. 2000. Morrow. Gr. 6–10.

Savion Glover did for tap what Lin-Manuel Miranda did for musical theater, and this blend of autobiography and dance history pays homage to many Black tap greats whose names should never be lost to the shuffle of time.

Taking Flight: From War Orphan to Star Ballerina. By Michaela DePrince and Elaine DePrince. 2014. Random/Ember. Gr. 7–12.

Dance Theatre of Harlem alumna DePrince tells an inspirational story of her plight as an orphan in Sierra Leone, her adoption by American parents, and path to becoming a ballerina.

Trailblazer: The Story of Ballerina Raven Wilkinson. By Leda Schubert. Illus. by Theodore Taylor III. 2018. little bee. Gr. 1–3.

African American Raven Wilkinson broke the color barrier for touring American classical dance companies by joining the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo in 1955, and she traveled the U.S. dancing beautiful ballet while confronting ugly bigotry.

A Conversation

Mara Rockliff and Melissa Sweet

by Sarah Hunter

There have been a number of picture-book biographies about Pop artist and art teacher Sister Corita Kent in the past several years, but Mara Rockliff and Melissa Sweet's *Signs of Hope* stands out from the crowd, thanks to its surprising narrator—a group of her students—and Sweet's distinctive collage artwork.

Mara Rockliff

Melissa Sweet

Sarah Hunter: ***What makes Sister Corita Kent in particular a compelling subject for a biography for children?***
Mara Rockliff: When I first learned about Corita Kent, I thought immediately: Here is somebody young readers *need* to meet. There are lots of picture books on famous artists, but Corita wasn't just an artist; she was a teacher who had such an impact on her students that even today, 60 years later, you'll meet art educators who say, not "I studied with Corita" or even "My teacher studied with Corita" but "My teacher's teacher studied with Corita, and it changed my life."

As someone who writes historical picture books, I'm always looking for that magic combo, a subject that is fun for kids but also meaningful to the adults who will be reading it with them. Usually, this means a subject with two sides. (For instance, *Gingerbread for Liberty!* is the story of a baker who becomes a spy: for kids, you've got danger and dessert; for grownups, a bilingual immigrant whose language skills help win our country's independence.) But Corita has the same appeal to readers of all ages, showing us how to fill our lives with joy and color and make art through play. What kid wouldn't love to have that kind of teacher? And what grownup wouldn't love to be that inspiration for a child in their life?
Melissa Sweet: This biography introduces readers to Corita in an accessible way: learning about her through her teaching and art. She had a conviction about life and art and a lot to say to her students, teaching them to see the world with fresh eyes and ears. Corita reminded me of teachers who seemed to ask so much from me, yet they're the teachers I remember well.

Hunter: ***Melissa, your illustrations are always so distinctive; how did you approach using your own art style to depict the work of an artist with her own distinctive style and technique?***
Sweet: I'm a huge fan of Corita's work, particularly the way she uses words, hand lettering, and fonts within her images. For this project, I worked with a printmaker who works in silk screen, though I quickly learned it takes practice to make good prints. But even the less successful prints became fodder for my collages. All the art was made by hand and some of it manipulated with my Xerox machine. Much of the lettering was printed with vintage wood type, similar to the type that Corita used. Most important, using quotes by Corita as part of the illustrations created another layer of storytelling.

Hunter: ***Mara, you used an unusual perspective, that of Kent's students, in the book. What made you choose that point of view?***
Rockliff: What a great question! Yes, it's told from the point of view of Corita's students as a group, speaking as "we"—what's known as a collective narrator. That wasn't there in early drafts. Originally, the story started:

> What do you see on this city street?
> People in the 1960s passing by see ordinary street signs, ugly billboards, and too many window ads to pay attention to.

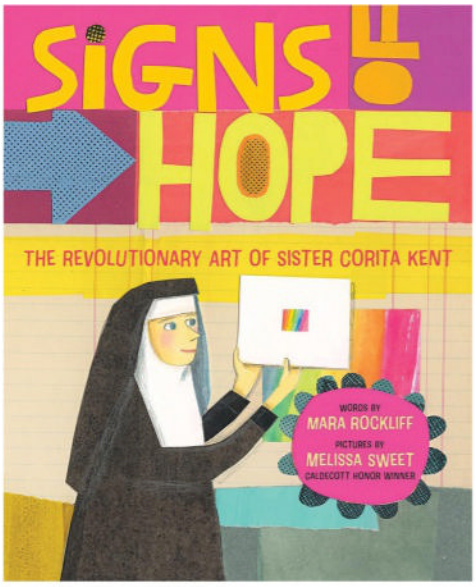
Even though I spoke directly to the reader, I felt it lacked immediacy. My editor, Courtney, suggested that I focus on Corita's students. That made perfect sense. I realized that the best way for young readers to experience Corita was directly, as if they were in her class:

Sister Corita teaches us to *SEE*
what everybody sees
but doesn't see.

Ordinary street signs,
ugly billboards,
posters no one pays attention to.

This way, the reader becomes part of the action. Together, "we" follow her through the streets of Los Angeles, seeing what she sees—not ugly billboards, but inspiration for ART. We visit her noisy, messy classroom, where we're not sure what is work and what is play, and we break all the rules, even our own. We go with her to galleries to see the Pop Art scene that she transcended, and we help her in the studio where she makes art that is for everyone.

Hunter: ***You've both worked on lots of picture-book biographies; how do you each approach distilling long, sometimes complex lives into such a short format for a young audience?***
Sweet: Research is key: read everything that might matter, talk to people, and sometimes travel to understand what to include about someone. There are many rules for writing, but one I live by is, as E. B. White wrote, "omit needless words." Another idea writers often mention is to write for an audience of one. That's a truism across any creative endeavor. I make the book I want to read.
Rockliff: It's a challenge, but it's fun. I do a ton of research, enough to write a much longer book. This always surprises kids. Why would I do all that extra work? Well, what I've discovered about research is that if I only do a little, then I have to tell the reader everything I know,



whether it's interesting or not. If I do a lot of research, then I can pick out the most exciting, funny, interesting, and important parts to tell my story.

Of course, once I've become an expert on a topic (i.e., a fangirl), it can be tough to let go of any of those colorful details. It helps to step back and remind myself why I'm writing the book. My drafting notes for *Signs of Hope* started like this:

What is the purpose of this book?

- Introduce the art of Corita Kent (show her style)
- Teach what she taught—look at ordinary things in a new way, be playful, see beauty
- Include some of her messages? love, peace, hope, joy, faith, energy, light, justice, equality, optimism, gratitude

This told me that I wasn't writing a biography so much as presenting how Corita worked and taught and thought about the world. So readers didn't need to know every detail of her life, just enough to see her as her students did. Anything beyond that could be relegated to the author's note.

Hunter: ***Sister Corita Kent's work emphasized looking at the world with fresh, curious eyes; did researching her life and art change the way you think about your own work?***
Sweet: Since making this art I've continued to do more simple printmaking in my studio. I love the velvety quality of printing ink. Corita's words often ring in my mind, especially how art and life are intertwined. I'm grateful to have spent time with her brilliant oeuvre.

Art from *There Was a Party for Langston.*

Read-alikes

And She Was Loved, by Andrea Davis Pinkney

By Sarah Hunter

Award-winning Andrea Davis Pinkney has made a name for herself writing powerful biographies for children, and she brings the same reverence and rigor to her latest project, *And She Was Loved*, about the life and work of the iconic Toni Morrison, who, among many other important accolades, was the first Black American to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. Readers interested in more Black twentieth-century literary luminaries will find plenty of inspiration in these books for early elementary schoolers.

A Crown of Stories: The Life and Language of Beloved Writer Toni Morrison. By Carole Boston Weatherford. Illus. by Khalif Tahir Thompson. 2024. HarperCollins/Quill Tree. Gr. 1–3.

Weatherford's evocatively written picture-book biography of Morrison begins with the Great Migration, which brought her parents to Ohio, and follows her storied life up through when President Obama awarded her the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

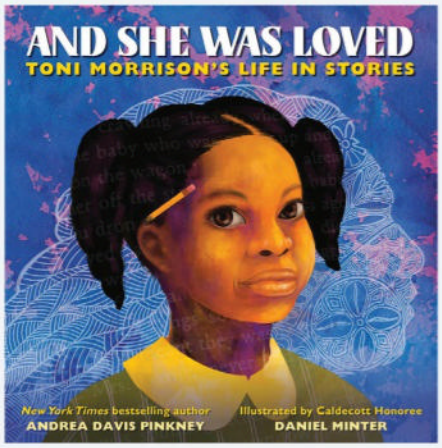
What I Must Tell the World: How Lorraine Hansberry Found Her Voice. By Jay Leslie. Illus. by Loveis Wise. 2024. Zando/Hillman Grad. K–Gr. 3.

This soaring salute to Hansberry, author of *A Raisin in the Sun*, details the playwright's inspirations, struggles, and triumphs as she strove to bring to the stage stories of Black American families like her own.

Jimmy's Rhythm and Blues: The Extraordinary Life of James Baldwin. By Michelle Meadows. Illus. by Jamiel Law. 2024. Harper. Gr. 1–3.

There aren't many books for younger readers about James Baldwin, but this fittingly oracular account of his life emphasizes his lifelong love of words and his drive to write about injustice and racism in the U.S.

And She Was Loved: Toni Morrison's Life in Stories. By Andrea Davis Pinkney. Illus. by Daniel Minter. 2025. Little, Brown. Gr. 1–3.



There is a line in Toni Morrison's novel *Song of Solomon* in which a character exclaims, "And she was loved," in an expression of resistance against the anti-Blackness she experiences. In this poetic paean to the late author, Pinkney employs the same line as a motif to express deep reverence and affection for Morrison's life and work. The text addresses Morrison directly in second person, which creates an intimacy between reader and subject. The narrative arc is straightforward, tracing a path from the subject's childhood to death, noting high and low points, accomplishments, victories, and personal and professional joy and pain, the refrain serving as both a reminder to readers and an homage to Morrison. Pinkney's sumptuous writing is paired perfectly with multilayered illustrations by Minter, who embeds washes of watercolor with white linework and acrylic overlays to convey the sheer vibrancy of Morrison. Minter addresses Morrison in the artist's note so that, from start to finish, *And She Was Loved* brims with the love felt by its creators. The text ends with a call to readers to spread their creative wings and chart their own course knowing they, too, are loved. Creative teachers will find many ways to use this lush book as a mentor text for creative writers. —*Amina Chaudhri*

A Song for August: The Inspiring Life of Playwright August Wilson. By Sally Denmead. Illus. by Alleanna Harris. 2024. Levine Querido. K–Gr. 3.

Denmead emphasizes not only Wilson's love of language but his self-directed education, which helped shape the remarkable grasp of storytelling and dialogue that made him such a renowned playwright.

There Was a Party for Langston. By Jason Reynolds. Illus. by Jerome Pumphrey and Jarrett Pumphrey. 2023. Atheneum. Gr. 1–3.

Reynolds' joyful fictional account of a party honoring Langston Hughes emphasizes the profound influence he had on such twentieth-century luminaries as Baldwin, Morrison, Maya Angelou, and countless more.

Jump at the Sun: The True Life Tale of Unstoppable Storycatcher Zora Neale Hurston. By Alicia D. Williams. Illus. by Jacqueline Alcántara. 2021. Simon & Schuster. Gr. 1–4.

In dynamic artwork and straightforward text packed with the dialect and dialogue that characterizes her work, Williams and Alcántara showcase Hurston's determination to become a writer and chronicler of Black American stories and voices.

Maya's Song. By Renée Watson. Illus. by Bryan Collier. 2022. Harper. Gr. 2–5.

Watson's stirring free-verse poems and Collier's striking, evocative paintings effectively highlight key moments in the life of acclaimed poet Angelou, from her childhood marked by selective mutism through her triumphant reclamation of the power of her own words.

WORDS BY JAY LESLIE PICTURES BY LOVEIS WISE
what i must tell the world
HOW LORRAINE HANSBERRY FOUND HER VOICE
A SONG FOR AUGUST
The Inspiring Life of Playwright August Wilson
Sally Denmead Illustrated by Alleanna Harris
jump at the sun
The True Life Tale of Unstoppable Storycatcher Zora Neale Hurston
Alicia D. Williams
Jacqueline Alcántara
WRITTEN BY RENÉE WATSON ILLUSTRATED BY BRYAN COLLIER
MAYA'S SONG

Reserve These Reads

Children & Teens

Get your hands on these hotly anticipated books, all out this month.

Older

The Assassin's Guide to Babysitting. By Natalie C. Parker. Candlewick. Gr. 7–12.

Tru and her extremely resourceful group of friends must protect an infant with a rare, dangerous talent in this swiftly paced adventure, great for reluctant readers.

A Dangerous Idea: The Scopes Trial, the Original Fight over Science in Schools. By Debbie Levy. Bloomsbury. Gr. 6–9.

The Scopes trial (1925) featured two great orators debating whether teaching Darwin's theory of evolution or the Christian Bible was inappropriate in public schools.

Everything Is Poison. By Joy McCullough. Dutton. Gr. 9–12.

As Carmela ventures into apprenticeship at her mother's apothecary, she quickly learns there's more darkness to the work—and the world.

"A high-octane adventure with killer tension."
THE ASSASSIN'S GUIDE TO BABYSITTING
NATALIE C. PARKER
EVERY THING IS POISON
JOY McCULLOUGH
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF BLOOD WATER PAINT

Art from *The Rival*.

The Rival. By Emma Lord. St. Martin's/Wednesday. Gr. 9–12.

College freshman Sadie thinks she's finally free of her high-school nemesis, Seb, but when he shows up vying for the same staff writing position, sparks fly—in more ways than one.

Where the Heart Should Be. By Sarah Crossan. Greenwillow. Gr. 8–11.

Crossan's breathtaking novel in verse examines the class struggles of the Irish potato famine through star-crossed romance.

Who Owns the Moon? And Other Conundrums of Exploring and Using Space. By Cynthia Levinson and Jennifer Swanson. Illus. by Thomas Gonzalez. Peachtree/Margaret Quinlin. Gr. 7–12.

This thought-provoking examination of modern space travel considers potential problems in conjunction with the 1967 Outer Space Treaty.

Middle

Chickenpox. By Remy Lai. Art by the author. Holt. Gr. 5–8.

When Abby is quarantined with her four siblings, the proximity makes her realize some important things about herself in this fun, relatable story perfect for fans of Raina Telgemeier.

Fresh Start. By Gale Galligan. Art by the author. Scholastic/Graphix. Gr. 3–6.

Ollie is used to moving every couple of years, but this time, she's staying put in the U.S., which means a whole new approach to making friends and finding a place to fit in.

Mixed-Up. By Kami Garcia. Art by Brittney Williams. First Second. Gr. 3–6.

Stella's struggling to keep up in fifth grade, until an understanding teacher recognizes that she's dyslexic. A dyslexia-friendly font makes this graphic novel appealing and accessible.

The Snips: A Bad Buzz Day. By Raúl the Third. Art by Raúl the Third and Elaine Bay. Little, Brown Ink. Gr. 2–5.

Creator of the popular Vamos! books, Raúl the Third launches a new series with this energetic early-reader comic starring a team of hair stylist superheroes.

Through Sand and Salt: A Tale of Discovery across the Sahara. By Elizabeth Zunon. Illus. by the author. Bloomsbury. Gr. 1–4.

In this eye-opening journey, Malik proudly accompanies his father on a camel caravan transporting salt across the Sahara.

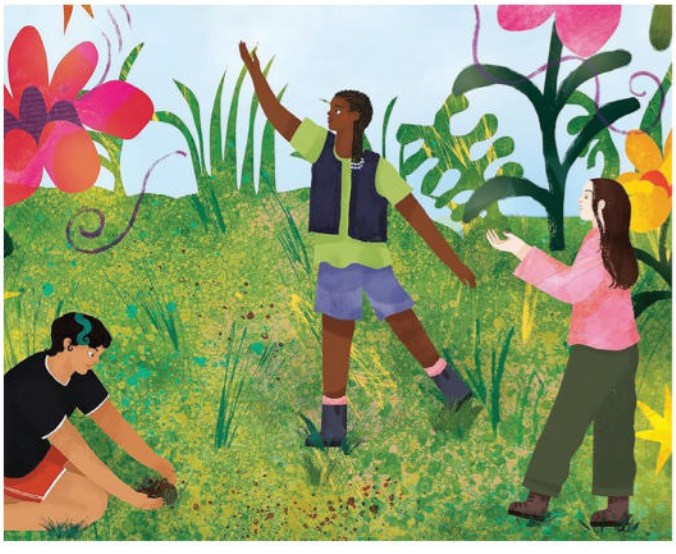
Will's Race for Home. By Jewell Parker Rhodes. Little, Brown. Gr. 4–8.

Acclaimed Rhodes tells the tale of the 1889 Oklahoma Land Rush through the eyes of 12-year-old Will, the son of formerly enslaved sharecroppers living in Texas.

Young

Beacon of Hope: The Life of Barack Obama. By Doreen Rappaport. Illus. by Tonya Engel. Little, Brown. PreS–Gr. 3.

This sensitive biography of Barack Obama focuses on his



quest for belonging, first for himself during a challenging childhood and then for all people.

Girls on the Rise. By Amanda Gorman. Illus. by Loveis Wise. Viking. K–Gr. 3.

Harnessing her gift for poetry, Gorman delivers an inspiring call to action for young readers, empowering them through uplifting rhymes that fill each page with purpose.

How Sweet the Sound: A Soundtrack for America. By Kwame Alexander. Illus. by Charly Palmer. Little, Brown. PreS–Gr. 2.

Stirring verse and stunning, exuberant artwork bring the history of American music to life, from its roots in Africa to its dynamic present.

Make a Pretty Sound: A Story of Ella Jenkins—the First Lady of Children's Music. By Traci N. Todd. Illus. by Eleanor Davis. Chronicle. K–Gr. 3.

Todd and Davis' poetic exploration of the life of the late Ella Jenkins highlights the many musical and social influences that shaped her career as a beloved performer of music for children.

Raven's Ribbons. By Tasha Spillett-Sumner. Illus. by Daniel Ramirez. Little, Brown. PreS–Gr. 3.

Raven loves attending round dances, but wishes he, too, could wear a beautiful ribbon skirt. Boys haven't worn ribbon skirts before, but that can change.

To See an Owl. By Matthew Cordell. Illus. by the author. Random House Studio. K–Gr. 3.

Janie loves owls, but she has never spotted one in the wild—until a new teacher helps her pursue her goal in this quiet picture book from Caldecott winner Cordell.

Manga Essentials

Art Manga

by Ashley Hawkins

It is perhaps only natural that mangaka would be drawn to the world of art as inspiration for their work. In these manga, artists of all types and art of varying forms take the spotlight.

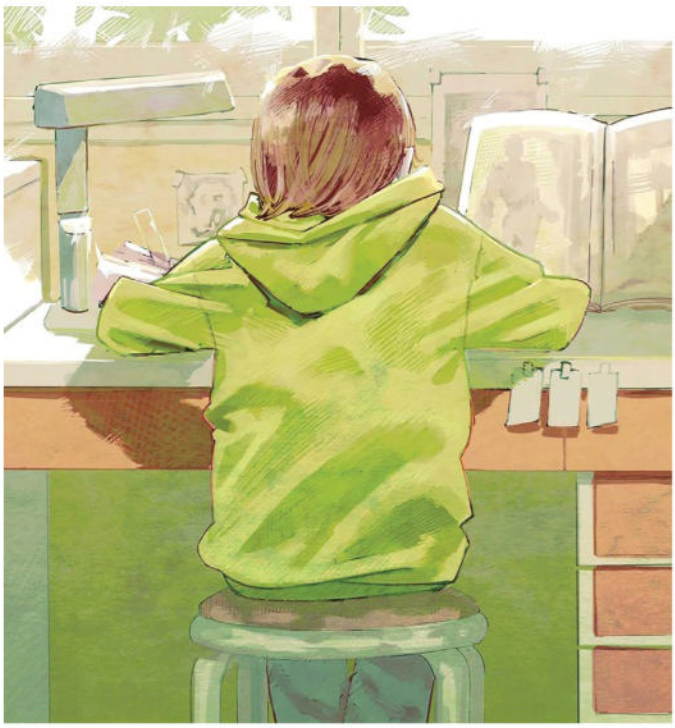
Art from *Look Back* and *Cats of the Louvre*.

Blank Canvas: My So-Called Artist's Journey. By Akiko Higashimura. Art by the author. Tr. by Jenny McKeon. 5 volumes (complete). Seven Seas Entertainment. Gr. 7–12.

Based on Higashimura's own experiences, this autobiographical manga explores how much growth is necessary to become an artist and a popular mangaka. Honest, empathetic, and humorous, this is a story any aspiring artist, especially those who want to make comics or manga, should read.

Blue Period. By Tsubasa Yamaguchi. Art by the author. Kodansha. 15 volumes (ongoing). Gr. 7–12.

An engrossing story exploring the competitive side of the art world, *Blue Period* follows popular student Yatora, who seems to have it all but who's actually bored with his perfect life. That is, until he discovers the thrill of creating art. But the art world is not so easily entered, and he is soon thrust into a savage battleground. Addictively readable and gorgeously illustrated, this is a can't-miss series.



Cats of the Louvre. By Taiyo Matsumoto. Art by the author. Tr. by Michael Arias. VIZ Media. 1 volume (complete). Gr. 10–Adult.

A masterpiece in its own right, *Cats of the Louvre* is a gorgeous ode to the iconic museum through the magical lives of the cats that inhabit its attic. Matsumoto brings the surreal, symbolic, and esoteric world of art to life with a lush art style that rewards multiple readings of this single volume. Best appreciated by seasoned manga readers, this is a unique book for lovers of art, manga, and cats.

Friday at the Atelier. By Sakura Hamada. Art by the author. Tr. by Matthew Alberts. Yen. 2 volumes (ongoing). Adult.

A much more adult title than the rest on this list, this series is about the unconventional arrangement between an artist obsessed with painting a motif of nude women and fish and his muse, a woman who has grown exhausted with life. Zany and fun, the story really flourishes when exploring the unique relationship between the artist and the model, especially as the lines blur into romance.

Look Back. By Tatsuki Fujimoto. Art by the author. VIZ Media. 1 volume (complete). Gr. 7–12.

An impactful single-volume manga that was recently adapted into a critically acclaimed film, *Look Back* is the heartrending tale of two friends who come together in the creation of art. A perfectly crafted story about adolescence and loss, this is an essential work.

Monthly Girls' Nozaki-Kun. By Izumi Tsubaki. Art by the author. Tr. by Leighann Harvey. Yen Press. 15 volumes (ongoing). Gr. 7–12.

A wacky romantic comedy that plays with shojo manga tropes, this manga is a fun read about an overly serious high-school boy, who happens to be a popular shojo mangaka, and the girl whose confession he completely misunderstands. Alongside the rom-com fun is a lot of insight into how manga is created, and the series tackles what is sometimes the more tedious side of the work with humor.

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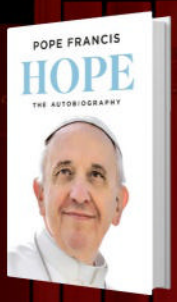
FOR 2025



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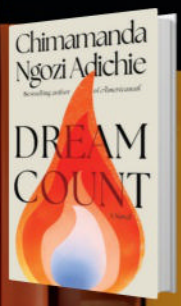

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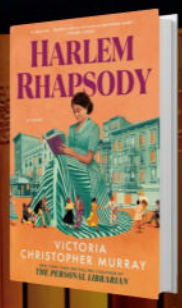

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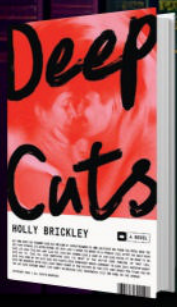

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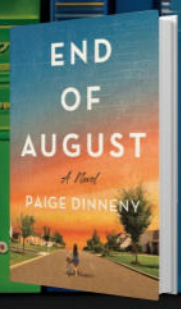

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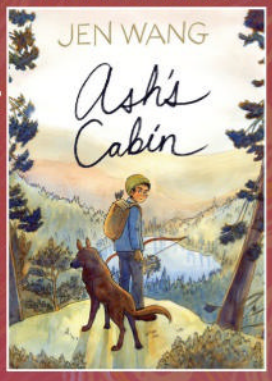
★"A masterpiece."
—*Booklist*

★"A fiercely empathetic instant classic."
—*BCCB*

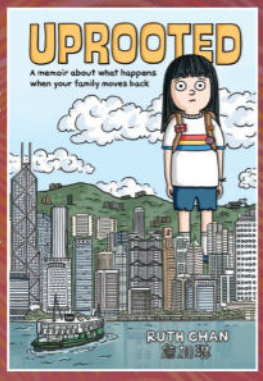
★★★★★★★



HC 9781250754059 | PB 9781250754066 | Ages 14–18

★"Perfection–literary and artistic–awaits here."
—*Booklist*

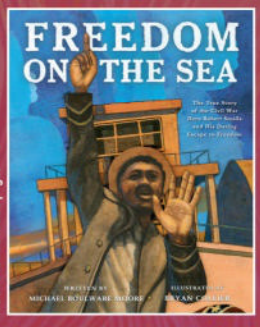
★★★★★



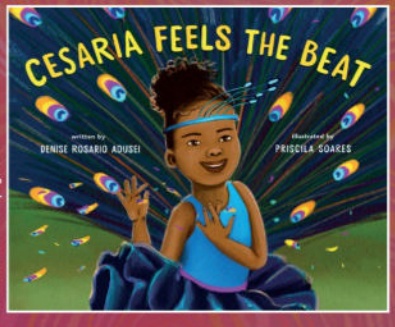
HC 9781250855336 | PB 9781250855343 | Ages 8–12

★"Earnest, funny, and evocative."
—*Kirkus Reviews*

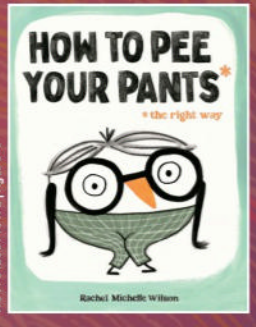
★★★★



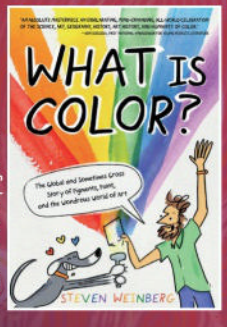
HC 9781250818355 | Ages 4–8



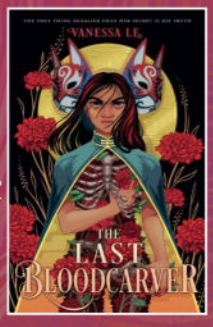
HC 9781250824967 | Ages 3–6



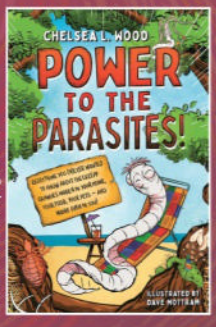
HC 9781250910172 | Ages 3–5



HC 9781250833419 | Ages 6–10



HC 9781250881526 | Ages 12–18



HC 9781250833983 | Ages 12–18

HC 9781250314857 | PB 9781250314864 | Ages 10–14

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